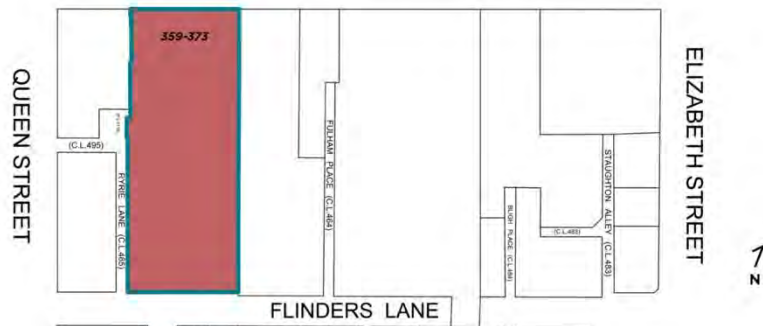


SITE NAME	Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building [also known as Optus Centre (current name)]
STREET ADDRESS	359-373 Collins Street, Melbourne
PROPERTY ID	102092



COLLINS STREET



SURVEY DATE: October 2019

SURVEY BY: GJM Heritage

HERITAGE INVENTORY No

EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY No

PLACE TYPE Individual Heritage Place

PROPOSED CATEGORY Significant

FORMER GRADE Ungraded

DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST: Bates Smart & McCutcheon

BUILDER: Not known

DEVELOPMENT PERIOD: Postwar Period (1945-1975)

DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION: c1972-1975

THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation focused on the postwar history of the site and did not address associations with Aboriginal people or organisations	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style 1.9 Beyond the curtain wall
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Buiness and finance

LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Office, Hotel, Studio, Caretaker, Smoking Room
1920s	Café/Restaurant, Office, Studio, Merchant, Bank
1960s	Retail, Office, Studio, Retail, Bank

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Extent of overlay: To extent of property boundary

SUMMARY

The building at 359-373 Collins Street, Melbourne was designed by Bates Smart & McCutcheon for the Victorian headquarters of the Commonwealth Banking Corporation. Construction of the multi-storey tower was completed in 1975.

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

Beyond the curtain wall

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding, screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

Business and finance in the postwar period

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17). Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

SITE HISTORY

The Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation building on the south side of Collins Street, between Queen and Elizabeth streets, was designed by Bates Smart & McCutcheon (Figure 1). The major designer on the project was Robert Bruce (Goad 2004:205). The City of Melbourne received a building permit application in August 1971, with the total cost of the project estimated at \$17,442,000 (BAI). An article published in January 1972 reported that the 33-storey building, 'claimed as Melbourne's "largest" bank', would serve as the Victorian headquarters of the Commonwealth Banking Corporation (*Age*, 12 Jan 1972:21). Construction of the multi-storey tower was completed in 1975 and at the time of completion was the tallest building in Melbourne (NTAV 2014:53; Goad 2004:205, 208).

The Commonwealth Banking Corporation had occupied an earlier building on the site, built c1922. Following demolition of this earlier building, Bates Smart & McCutcheon also designed a temporary structure to accommodate the bank on site during the construction phase. This was completed by January 1972 (*Age*, 12 Jan 1972:21; S&Mc).

Architectural drawings by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, dated 1972, show the elevations and original form of the Collins Street entrance of the tower building (Figure 2 - Figure 4). Goad described the building's design (drawing similarities to Bates Smart & McCutcheon's design of 251-257 Collins Street), as being set back from Collins Street, with a 'strong horizontal emphasis that indicated

graphic trabeated construction' and glazing set back deeply from the face of the building, which were 'clear expressions of structure' (Goad 2004:205). At ground level, Goad noted that the tower broke the line of the 'street wall' in favour of the current Melbourne City Council building regulations for mini-plazas. The multi-level banking chamber 'took advantage of pedestrian movement between Flinders Lane and Collins Street', essentially continuing Melbourne's network of lanes and arcades within the building itself (Goad 2004:205). The building was clad with 'reconstructed granite-faced precast concrete wall units' (*Architect*, Nov/Dec 1974:8).

A recent low-scale addition has been constructed off the Collins Street façade, designed by architects Woods Bagot (Schiavello). In 2019 the building serves as the Optus Centre (CoMMaps).

Bates Smart & McCutcheon, architects

Bates, Smart & McCutcheon was formed when Osborn McCutcheon joined the existing firm of Bates & Smart in 1926. Bates & Smart had itself been born out of previous iterations of a firm that could be traced back to Reed & Barnes, making it one of the oldest practices in the country (Goad 2012:72). By the 1960s the firm had become one of Australia's largest architectural firms. It exists today as Bates Smart (Goad 2012:72).

During the 1930s, Bates, Smart & McCutcheon had earned a reputation for designing Georgian-style residences, but also went on to win RVIA awards for their work on the AMP Building in Collins Street (1926-31), Buckley & Nunn Building in Bourke Street (now David Jones, 1933), and the Second Church of Christ Scientist in Camberwell (1936-37).

By the 1950s, Bates, Smart & McCutcheon had become Australia's 'expert' in high-rise office buildings design (Goad 2012:73). Much of their work at this time was large structures with glass curtain walls. In Melbourne this was exemplified by ICI House, which broke the city's existing 132-foot (40m) height limit in 1955-8 (Goad 2012:73). Other work completed by the firm in the 1950s included the first of the Sleigh Buildings at 158-172 Queen Street, Melbourne (1953-55 & 1964), Union House at 43-51 Queen Street, Melbourne (1957) and the AMP Building at 402-408 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne (1956-58).

Bates, Smart & McCutcheon continued to expand into the 1960s and 70s, with its design approach shifting from glazed curtain walls to facades of artificial stone or prefabricated concrete panels. Works in Melbourne during this period included AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, Bourke Street (1965-69) in association with US firm, Skidmore Owings and Merrill; the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61); the South British Insurance Company Ltd Building at 155-161 Queen Street (1961-62) and the Methodist Church Centre at 130-134 Little Collins Street (1966-67) with F C Armstrong.

In the 1970s the firm designed the Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street, Melbourne (c1972-75); the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73) and the double tower and plaza complex of Collins Place, Collins Street (1970-80), undertaken in collaboration with international architecture practice, I M Pei. Other notable works by the firm include the large collaborative designs of Melbourne Central with Kisho Kurokawa (1983-92) and Federation Square with Lab Architecture Studio (1997-2002) (Goad 2012:74).



Figure 1. Illustration of the proposed multi-storey building by Bates Smart & McCutcheon (c.1970) (Goad 2004; *Architect*, Sep/Oct 1970:12).

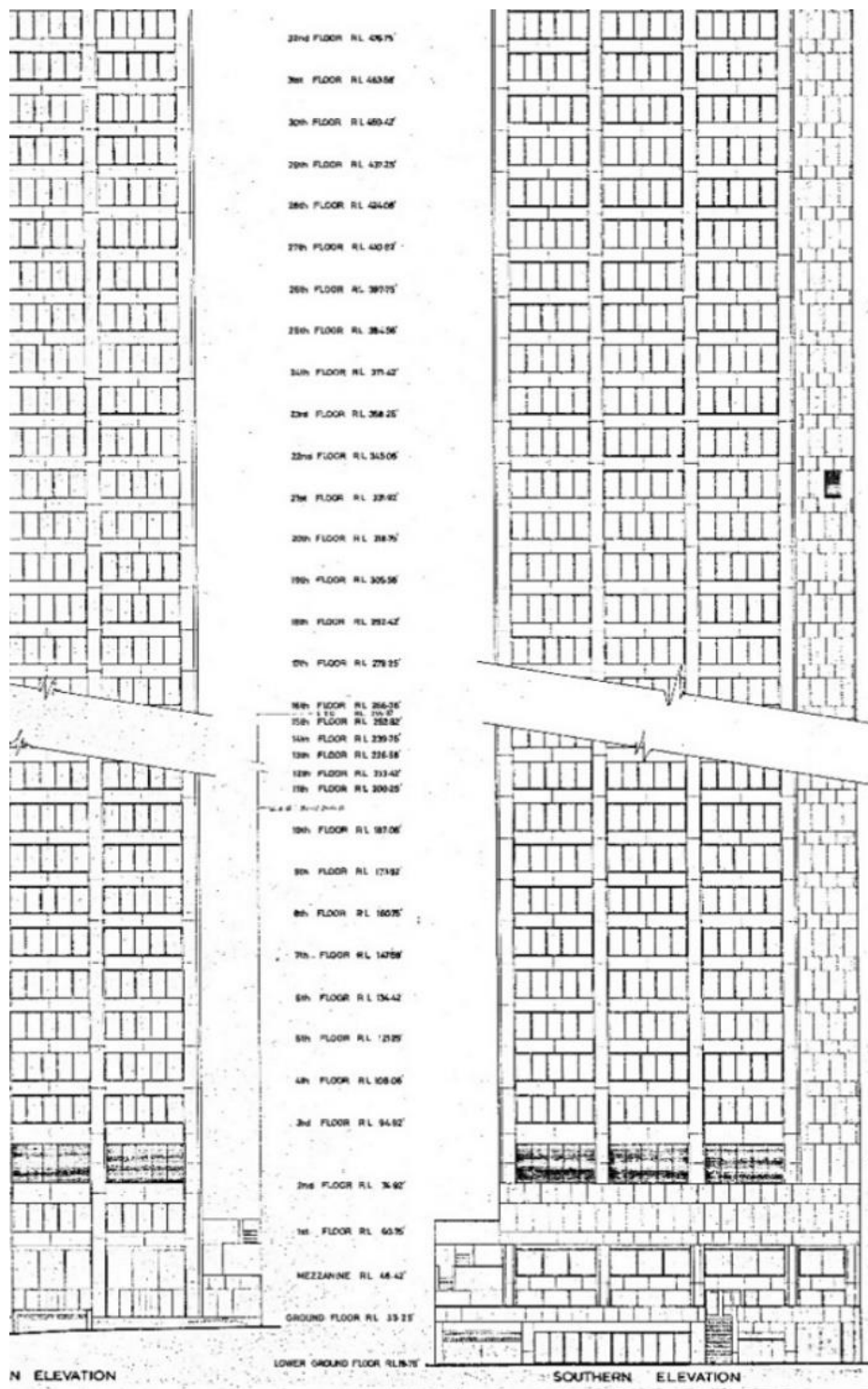


Figure 2. North elevation to Collins Street (left) and south elevation to Flinders Lane (right). Drawings by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, dated January 1972 (BAP).

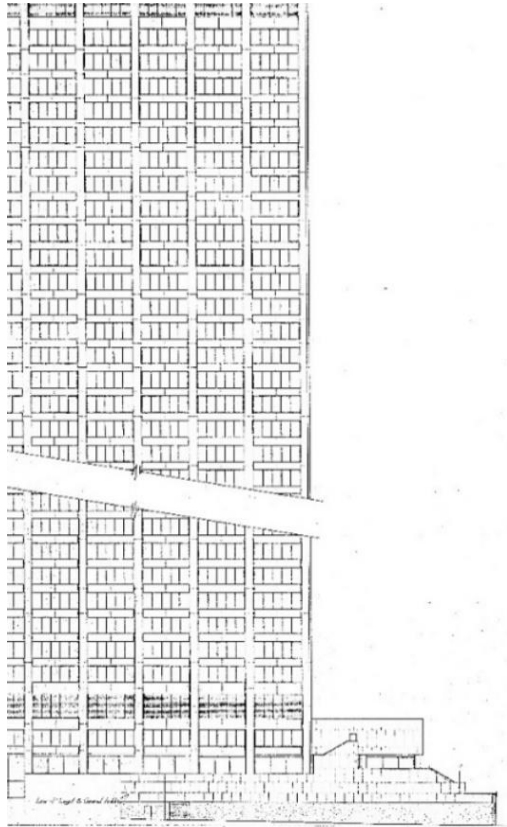


Figure 3. West elevation. Drawing by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, dated January 1972 (BAP).

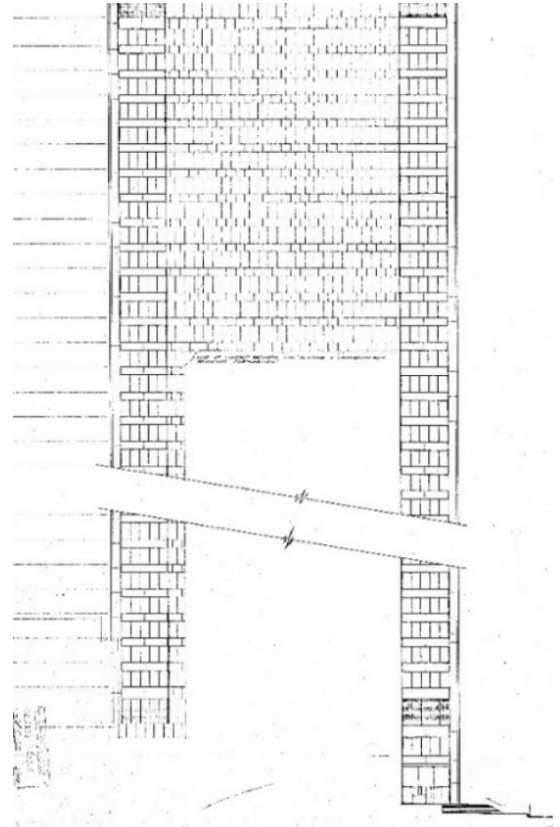


Figure 4. East elevation. Drawing by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, dated January 1972 (BAP).



Figure 5. Illustration of the building published in the Nov/Dec 1974 issue of *Architect*, advertising reconstructed granite cladding by Melocco.



Figure 6. The tower under construction; photo dated c1975 (SLV, Hans Bonney, photographer, Image H2009.50/262).



Figure 7. Interior of the completed banking chamber (Goad 2004:209).

SITE DESCRIPTION

The Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street is a 33-storey commercial building located on the south side of Collins Street between Queen Street and Elizabeth Street. The building has frontages to both Collins Street and Flinders Lane and is accessible from both frontages. Constructed from c1972-75 to a design by Bates, Smart & McCutcheon, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

The Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building is of rectangular form with narrow façades to Collins Street and Flinders Lane. The building is set back approximately 8 metres from Collins Street – a feature for which additional height to the building was allowed. The building is also set back from the adjoining building to the west (Ryrie Lane at the rear) and partially set back from the adjoining building to the east (Fulham Place at the rear). The main tower building is set well back from Flinders Lane, with a double-level podium occupying this space. The podium comprises access stairs leading to the elevated Collins Street entry to the east and an access ramp to the basement carpark on the western boundary at Ryrie Lane.

The building is of concrete encased steel column and beam construction, with the trabeated structure clearly expressed on the north, south and west curtain wall facades. This results in a regular grid-like pattern across these facades, formed from reconstructed granite-faced precast concrete wall units. Wide spandrels, with rows of deeply recessed aluminium-framed glazing, sit flush with continuous vertical piers that rise uninterrupted from above street level. The grid-like patterning continues around the building to the corners of the east façade. Abutting an existing building on the adjoining site when the subject place was constructed, the eastern wall is primarily a plain façade.

A low-scale, double-storey structure has recently been built across the Collins Street façade at ground level, utilising the original eight-metre setback of the multi-storey building. This is a glazed structure with light framing and central projecting canopy. Alterations have also been made to the rear podium in Flinders Lane, however the general form has been retained.

INTEGRITY

The Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building above street level, remains highly intact to its original construction in c1972-75. A recent addition to the Collins Street frontage of the building at street level has altered the original design at this frontage.

Overall, the building retains a high degree of architectural integrity to the Post-War Modernist style in fabric, form and detail. While the building has undergone alterations at street level, these do not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the place as a fine example of a Post-War Modernist multi-storey commercial building.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of a 1960s to mid 1970s multi-storey office building design. The building's three grid-like walls of clearly expressed structure, clad with precast granite-faced concrete panels, dominated the skyline when constructed as the tallest building in the CBD in the 1970s. Despite the redesign of the street-level facade, the dominant upper facades of the Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation building remain highly intact to their original design and can be clearly observed from Collins Street and Flinders Lane.

There are a number of buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building. These are detailed below.

State-significant places

A small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne have been assessed as being of State-level significance and are included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). These include:

- Total House, 170-90 Russell Street (Bogle & Banfield 1964-65; VHR H2329 & HO1095)
- Former Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-44 Bourke Street (Peter Muller 1966-69)
- Victorian Government Offices, Treasury Reserve Precinct (Yuncken Freeman 1967-68 – outside the Hoddle Grid)

- Eagle House, 473 Bourke Street (Yuncken Freeman 1971-72; VHR H1807 & HO901)
- BHP House, 130-148 William Street (Yuncken Freeman 1969-72; VHR H1699 & HO767).

Locally-significant places

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from this period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme on a permanent basis. Those that are, are generally currently included within Heritage Precincts but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places, as follows:

Precinct Heritage Overlay



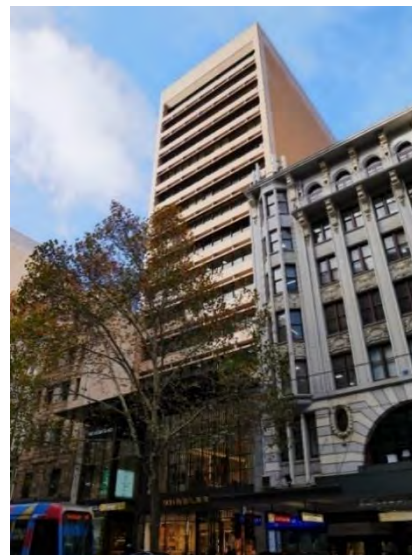
Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street, (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1974) included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct (Non-contributory).



Wales Corner, 221-231 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1964-66) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Swanston Street) Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, 251-257 Collins Street, (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1974-73 included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Flinders Lane) (Non-contributory).

One individual heritage place recently included in a site-specific Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis is the Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1966) (HO1213):



Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

Other examples

Despite the demolition of many 1960s and 1970s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the advancement of construction techniques from the 1960s through to the mid 1970s and demonstrate the broad range of design approaches of the period. The podiums of the majority of these places have been modified at street level. Examples include:



Former RACV Club, 111-129 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961) (Interim HO1068)



Former Australia Pacific House, 136-144 Exhibition Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1975-78)



Royal Insurance Group Building, 430-442 Collins Street, (Yuncken Freeman, 1965) (Interim HO1010)



Office Building, 516-520 Collins Street (architect unknown, c1974)



Former Guardian Building, 454-456 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1960-61)



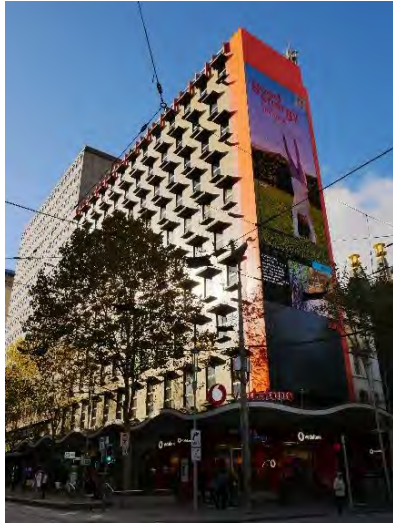
Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building, 155-161 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961-62)



Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



MLA Building, 308-336 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1963)



Royal Mail House, 255-267 Bourke Street (D Graeme Lumsden, 1963)



Former Sleigh Corner Building, 158-164 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1964)



The Former Houston Building, 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kolle & Associates, 1965)



AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street (Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1965-69)



Former Dalgety House, 457-471 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp & Walker, 1966-68)



Former State Saving Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1967-68)



Former Legal & General House, 375-383 Collins Street (B Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking, 1967)



Former AMP Building, 344-350 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1966-68)



Equitable House, 335-349 Little Collins Street (unknown architect, 1968)



Former Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street (Meldrum & Partners with Peddle Thorp Walker, 1968-70)



Former Methodist Church Centre, 130-134 Little Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1966-67)



Cowan House, 457-469 Little Collins Street (E & G Kolle, 1969)



Lonsdale Exchange, 447-553 Lonsdale Street
(Commonwealth Department of Works, 1969)



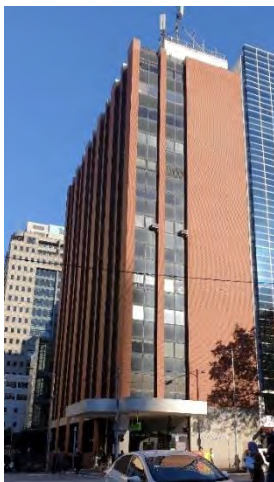
Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William Street
(Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



Former Bryson Centre, 174-192 Exhibition Street (Perrot
Lyon Timlock & Kesa, 1970-72)



Office Building, 178-188 William Street (McIntyre
McIntyre & Partners, c1972-73)



Nubrick House, 269-275 William Street (Buchan Laird &
Buchan, 1972)



Former Law Department Building, 221-231 Queen
Street (Fischer Group, 1972)



Former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch, 85-91 Queen Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1973)



Former MLC Building, 303-317 Collins Street (Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, c1970-1973)



Office Building, 589-603 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp de Preu, 1973-75)

Analysis

As a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building, the Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey commercial buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne. Similar to a number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings listed above, the subject building clearly demonstrates this class of place.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓	<p>CRITERION A Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION B Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).</p>
	<p>CRITERION C Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).</p>
✓	<p>CRITERION D Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).</p>
	<p>CRITERION E Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION F Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)</p>
	<p>CRITERION G Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION H Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an Individual Heritage Place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-4)	No
INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

OTHER

N/A

REFERENCES

Contextual History references contained within *City of Melbourne Hoddle Grid Heritage Review: Postwar Thematic Environmental History 1945-1975*

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Building Application Plans (BAP), City of Melbourne.

City of Melbourne Maps (CoMMaps), Site Details.

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Goad, Philip (2012), 'Bates Smart & McCutcheon' in Philip Goad & Julie Willis's (Eds.) (2012), *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Port Melbourne.

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The Age.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

**Central Activities District
Conservation Study 1985** Ungraded

**Central City Heritage
Review 1993** Ungraded

**Review of Heritage
Overlay Listings in the
CBD 2002** Ungraded

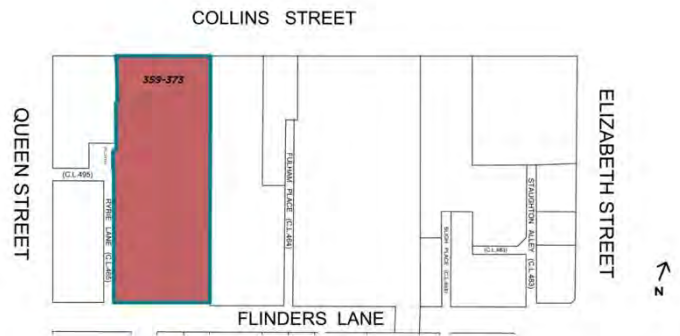
**Central City Heritage
Review 2011** Ungraded

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building



PS ref no: HO1322XXXX



What is significant?

The Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building, 359-373 Collins Street, a multi-storey office building constructed c1972-75.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing
- The building's high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations made to the lower levels are not significant.

How it is significant?

The Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

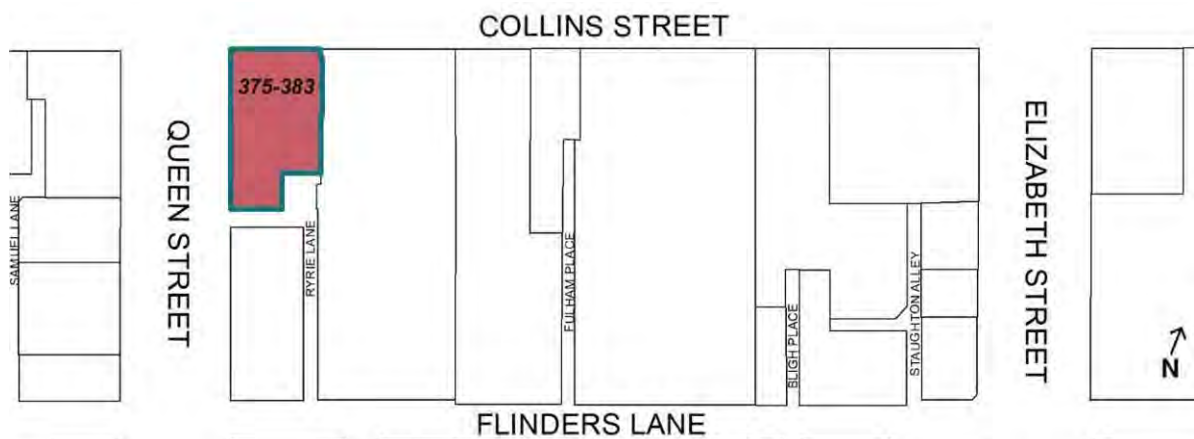
Constructed in c1972-75 to a design by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, the Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building has a clear association with the postwar building boom which transformed central Melbourne into a modern high-rise city. The design of these commercial buildings from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s – many of which were architect designed – was driven by the commercial demands and the prestige afforded by a dominant city presence (Criterion A).

The Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building is a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building. The building strongly reflects the style which was popular in the 1960 to the mid 1970s, particularly in central Melbourne. Constructed as a 33-storey structure, the Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a later postwar commercial building, including three grid-like walls of clearly expressed structure, and the use of materials such as granite-faced precast concrete panel cladding. These demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style (Criterion D).

Primary source

[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\)](#)[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\) \(updated March 2022\)](#)

SITE NAME	Former Legal & General House
STREET ADDRESS	375-383 Collins Street, Melbourne
PROPERTY ID	102093



SURVEY DATE: March 2019

SURVEY BY: Context

HERITAGE INVENTORY N/A

EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY No

PLACE TYPE Individual Heritage Place

PROPOSED CATEGORY Significant

FORMER GRADE Ungraded

DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST: Bernard Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking

BUILDER: E A Watts Pty Ltd

DEVELOPMENT PERIOD: Postwar Period (1945-1975)

DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION: 1967

THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations.	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style 1.9 Beyond the curtain wall
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Business and finance

LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Office
1920s	Office
1960s	Office

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Extent of overlay: Refer to map

SUMMARY

The former Legal & General House at 375-383 Collins Street, Melbourne, is a 17-storey postwar office building built in 1967 to a design by architects Bernard Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking in the Post-War Modernist style. The building opened in 1967 for Legal & General Assurance Society Limited and was occupied by that company until 1993. *It continues to be used as offices today.*

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

Beyond the curtain wall

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding, screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

Business and finance in the postwar period

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17).

Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

SITE HISTORY

The subject site of 375-383 Collins Street forms part of Crown Allotment 18, Block 4, first purchased by Arthur Willis for J McIntyre for £42 in 1837 ('Plan of Melbourne' 1838; DCLS 1839). By the late nineteenth century Block 4 was developed with mostly masonry buildings of three to five storeys.

Commercial businesses, predominantly in the fields of banking and insurance, populated Block 4 and continued to make up the dominant industry in that block into the twentieth century (Mahlstedt Map no 4, 1888). In 1887 a building permit was registered for the subject site for the construction of an eight-storey building for merchant F W Prell. David Mitchell oversaw the construction of the substantial building to the design of architect Francis Maloney White (MCC registration no 3102, as cited in AAI, record no 71566; Broome et al 2016:2). The building, occupied by several commercial agencies, including North British & Mercantile Insurance, was one of three highly ornate buildings known as Prell's Buildings, all built on prominent corner sites with Queen Street frontages, constructed by Mitchell and designed by White (see Figure 1) (Broome et al 2016). At the time of their construction, Prell's Buildings were amongst Melbourne's tallest (*Bendigo Advertiser* 15 June 1888:3; Mahlstedt Map section 1 no 15, 1910). In 1929 the building on the subject site was extensively remodelled for the Australian Provincial Assurance Association (APA) (*Argus* 14 September 1929:6). As part of the remodelling, the APA erected a tower atop the building that was described, following its completion,

as a new landmark on the site of Prell's Building (see Figure 2) (*Argus* 28 June 1930:6). The building became known as the Australian Provincial Assurance (APA) Building during this time. APA occupied the ground floor of the building and leased the above ground storeys to commercial tenants, many of whom were insurance or banking organisations (S&Mc 1940).

Prior to construction of the subject building, English company Legal & General Assurance Society Limited acquired the 1887 building in 1954 to commence operations in Australia (CT:V6002 F251). In 1955, the Legal & General Assurance Society Limited and APA occupied the ground floor of the 1887 building (S&Mc 1955). The following year Legal & General Assurance established its first Australian branch at 375-383 Collins Street, which opened in 1956, and the building became known as the Legal & General Building (*Age* 6 August 1955:27; *Sydney Morning Herald* 31 December 1955:25; S&Mc 1960). Legal & General retained ownership of the subject site until 1993 (CT:V6002 F51).

Legal & General Assurance Society Limited was formed in London in 1836 as the New Law Life Assurance Society, restricted to those in the legal profession. The name was changed to Legal & General Life Assurance Society in the 1920s when policies were made available to the general public. The society expanded in the United Kingdom and acquired a number of overseas life assurance companies, and by 1956, Legal & General Assurance reputedly had the largest ordinary insurance branch business in the United Kingdom. By the 1960s, the company's assets were valued at £1 billion (Legal & General Group 2019; *Age* 4 February 1956:5).

Legal & General Assurance Society Ltd announced the establishment of its first life assurance branch in Australia, in Melbourne, in 1956 (*Age* 4 February 1956:5). The company's subsidiary, the Gresham Fire & Accident Society, had operated in Australia from 1912.

Legal & General Assurance's business invested several million pounds in Australia and grew exponentially in the late 1950s. Between 1946 and 1958, the Society's assets increased from £100 million to £400 million (*Age* 14 January 1959:6). The Society was formally admitted to the Life Offices' Assurance Society for Australasia in 1966 (*Age* 21 December 1966:11).

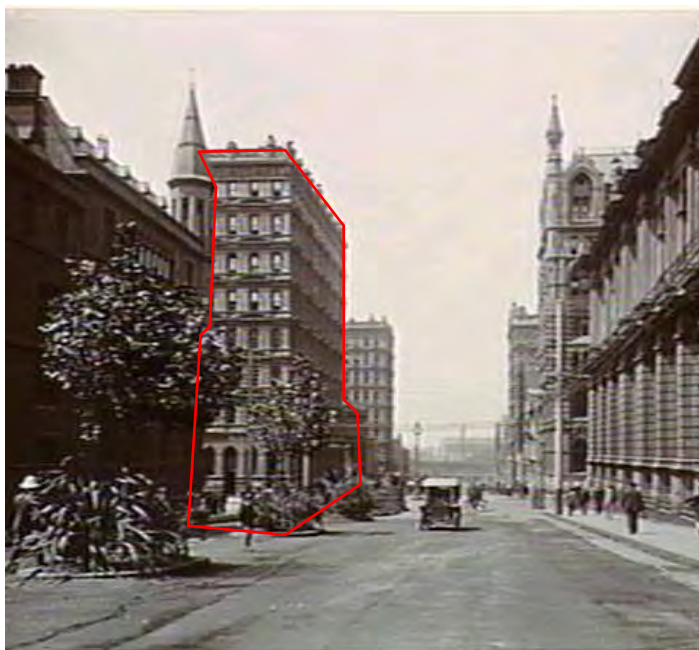


Figure 1. Queen Street looking south showing Prell's Buildings, c1913-1914. The Prell's building that was formerly located on the subject site is outlined in red. (Source: SLV)



Figure 2. Prell's Building on the subject site during remodelling in 1929. (Source: *Argus* 14 September 1929:6)

In 1965 Legal & General Assurance filed a building application for the erection of a new building valued at £1,300,000 on the subject site (MBAI). In 1966-67 E A Watts constructed the 17-storey building, named Legal & General House, to a design by architects Bernard Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hockey (see Figure 3) (CoMMaps). During its construction, an article in the *Age* described the building as contributing to Melbourne's changing skyline, because of its height and the coppery glow of its façade, designed for sun and glare protection. The building's heat-reflecting glass cladding, an innovation at the time, incorporated a transparent gold coating capable of resisting and reflecting infrared sun waves (*Age* 25 October 1966:13). The newspaper article noted that the new building would feature a paved and landscaped forecourt set 20 feet back from Collins Street, and be faced with white mosaic tiles articulated with black mosaic tile recess (see Figure 4) (*Age* 25 October 1966:13).

In 1967, space in Legal & General House was advertised for lease. Each level was air-conditioned and comprised 6315 square feet of space on each floor (*Age* 28 June 1967:11). By 1970, the majority of the floors had been filled by multiple commercial enterprises, many belonging to insurance and brokering agencies. Legal & General Assurance Society Ltd occupied the ground floor and Capel Courts Securities Ltd occupied several other floors within the building in 1974 (S&Mc 1970, 1974). Internal partitions were added and removed within the building from the 1960s through to the 1980s (MBAI).

In 1984 the entrance and lobby were refurbished, and a canopy erected to cover exposed decorative beams within the courtyard (MBAI). The ground-level façade was faced with marble cladding the following year, concurrent with alterations to the ground and seventh floors (MBAI).

The Legal & General Assurance Society Ltd became a wholly owned division of the Legal & General Group in the 1970s. In 1991, the company decided to abandon the Melbourne property market and

concentrate on its portfolio in Sydney, Brisbane and possibly Canberra (*Age* 23 October 1991:24). In October 1991, the Legal & General Group announced that it planned to sell Legal & General House, its last remaining Melbourne building, for between \$15 and \$20 million (*Age* 23 October 1991:24). Director of Legal & General noted that the building was offered at a 'realistic price' because it required extensive refurbishment (*Age* 23 October 1991:24). With its headquarters in London, Legal & General continues to operate today, offering investment management, lifetime mortgages, pensions, annuities, life assurance, and general insurance (Legal & General Group 2019).

The subject building was sold in 1993 to Perpetual Nominees Ltd, which subsequently carried out a series of refurbishment works to the building with the bulk of work taking place in 1998. It is likely that components of the 1998 refurbishment involved the clear green tinted glazing clad to the ground level and an open balcony with glass balustrade, metal railing (CT:6002 F251; CoMMaps).

Offices in the building continued to be occupied by the legal and financial professions through the 1990s-2000s (*Age* 15 May 1995:25; 23 December 2000:80).

The building presently houses offices occupied by 36 businesses (CoMMaps).



Figure 3. New Legal & General House under construction, 1966. (Source: *Age* 25 October 1966:13)



Figure 4. Photograph showing Legal & General House completed. (Source: Crothers 1967, SLV)

Bernard Evans (Bernard Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking), architect

Bernard Evans (1905-1981) was an architect, builder and civic leader. Born in Manchester, his family emigrated in 1913 and Bernard worked for his father as a designer and builder, studied at the Working Man's College (now RMIT University) and established the Premier Building Company in 1928. His expansive career spanned a period as Melbourne City Councillor (1949-73) and Lord Mayor (1959, 1960). Evans was known for his work on flats and public housing. His work in the 1950s

and 60s was concerned with office buildings and the Emerald Hill Court Estate in South Melbourne. His impressive Ampol House (1958) with the spiral staircase, at the corner of Grattan Street and Elizabeth Street, was demolished in 2012 (Dunstan 2012:237-8).

Evans campaigned for the removal of the 40-metre (132-foot) height limit for buildings in the city centre. His architectural firm of Bernard Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking Pty Ltd was disbanded in 1975 following Evans' resignation in 1971. A larger than life figure, he was knighted in 1962 but faced allegations of conflict of interest with his private companies and his role as a Councillor for the City of Melbourne (Dunstan 2012:237-8).

SITE DESCRIPTION

The former Legal & General House at 375-383 Collins Street, Melbourne, is a 17-storey reinforced concrete frame commercial building, originally constructed in 1967 and refurbished at ground level in 1998. The building exhibits characteristics of the Post-War Modernist style, evident in its strong modular format reflective glass cladding. Located on a prominent corner with frontages to both Queen Street and Collins Street, the building has an 'L-shape' footprint and also has a rear frontage to Ryrie Lane.

The ground level main entry to the building is on the Queen Street frontage, enclosed by a projecting steel and glass 'loggia' that occupies the original set back space to the Queen Street boundary. At the top of the building there is a thin 'floating' roof slab supported by columns aligned with the main structural grid.

The Legal & General House was notable for being '...faced with white mosaic tiles articulated with black mosaic tile recess(es)', the glass used in its windows that featured '...transparent gold coating capable of resisting and reflecting infra-red sun waves' and other aspects of its design and planning including the '... paved and landscaped forecourt set 20 feet back from Collins Street'. The mosaic tiling and tinted glazing remain extant. Between the bottom and top levels, the façade exhibits a robust grid pattern created with three-dimensional square panels clad in white mosaic tiles, contrasted with a recessed black mosaic tiled surfaces. Each module of white mosaic-tiled square precast concrete frame surrounds a copper mosaic-tiled internal panel surrounding paired windows with gold-tinted glazing.

The overall strong modularity of the facades of the building also continued down to the ground plane as rectangular columns, so that the facade at street level was dominated by the double height colonnade (see figure 4). While still extant, the ground floor colonnade is now partially overlaid by the recent glass cladding.

In what is understood to be major components of its 1998 refurbishment, the ground level to the Queen Street and Collins Street frontages are clad in clear green tinted frameless glazing fixed to the reinforced concrete structure, and with thin horizontal aluminium spandrels. On the south-western corner is a small, open balcony with glass balustrade, metal railing and compact canopy overhead supported by two squat, rectangular concrete columns.

INTEGRITY

The former Legal & General House at 375-383 Collins Street is highly intact with few changes visible to original fabric. Above the ground and first floor levels, the building retains its original modular pattern of fenestration, original stylistic details, and with original materials to wall surfaces and glazing

. The thin 'floating' roof slab supported by columns is also retained. The distinctive ground floor colonnade has been partially obscured by clear and green tinted frameless glazing with thin horizontal aluminium spandrels, reducing the visual impact of the double height colonnade, although at street level on the southern and eastern elevations the original rectangular concrete columns are extant. The original setback from Queen Street, a notable feature of the original building design, has also been partially enclosed by a projecting steel and glass 'loggia'. The building also retains its original built form and scale, configuration, and materiality. Overall the building has high integrity.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The 1950s saw the development of the modern multi-story office building in Melbourne, often built for insurance companies or finance companies, or for professional offices. From this time through to the mid 1970s, the Post-War Modernist style enjoyed widespread popularity, particularly for high-rise commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne. Reinforced concrete frames provided the structural systems, allowing the façade to be clad in a non-load bearing curtain wall. In early examples, curtain walls were typically fully glazed, while in later examples, precast concrete was used to achieve variety of expression and flexibility of form, led by Bates Smart McCutcheon's South British Building of 1960-62.

There are a number of buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the Royal Insurance Group building. These are detailed below.

State-significant places

A small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne have been assessed as being of State-level significance and are included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). These include:

Total House, 170-90 Russell Street (Bogle & Banfield 1964-65; VHR H2329 & HO1095)

Former Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-44 Bourke Street (Peter Muller 1966-69)

Victorian Government Offices, Treasury Reserve Precinct (Yuncken Freeman 1967-68 – outside the Hoddle Grid)

Eagle House, 473 Bourke Street (Yuncken Freeman 1971-72; VHR H1807 & HO901)

BHP House, 130-148 William Street (Yuncken Freeman 1969-72; VHR H1699 & HO767).

Locally-significant places

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from this period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme on a permanent basis. Those that are, are generally currently included within Heritage Precincts but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places, as follows:

Precinct Heritage Overlay

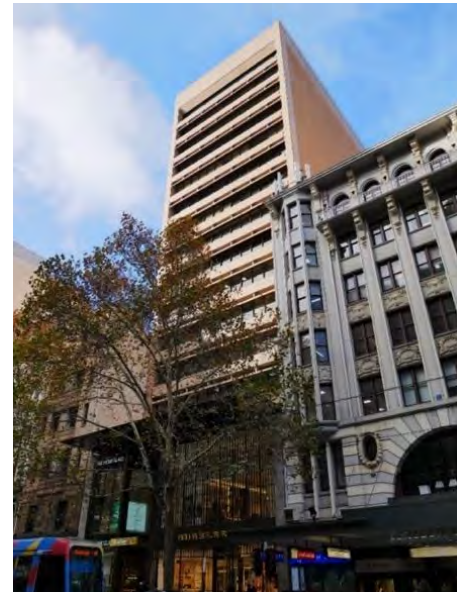
Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street, (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1974) included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct (Non-contributory).



Wales Corner, 221-231 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1964-66) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Swanston Street) Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, 251-257 Collins Street, (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1974-73) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Flinders Lane) (Non-contributory).

One individual heritage place recently included in a site-specific Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis is the Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1966) (HO1213):



Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

Other examples

Despite the demolition of many 1960s and 1970s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the advancement of construction techniques from the 1960s through to the mid 1970s and demonstrate the broad range of design approaches of the period. The podiums of the majority of these places have been modified at street level. Examples include:



Former RACV Club, 111-129 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961) (Interim HO1068)



Former Australia Pacific House, 136-144 Exhibition Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1975-78)



Office Building, 178-188 William Street (McIntyre
McIntyre & Partners, 1972-73)



Office Building, 516-520 Collins Street (architect
unknown, c1974)



Former Guardian Building, 454-456 Collins Street
(Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1960-61)



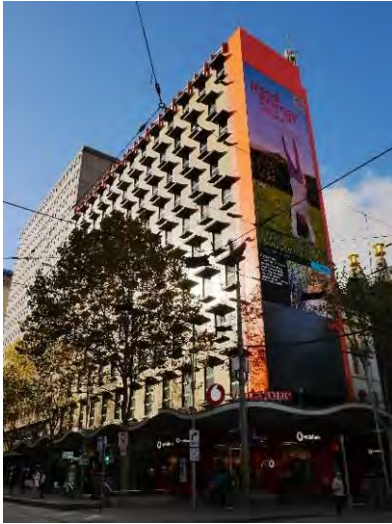
Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building,
155-161 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon,
1961-62)



Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke
Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



MLA Building, 308-336 Collins Street (Stephenson &
Turner, 1963)



Royal Mail House, 255-267 Bourke Street (D Graeme Lumsden, 1963)



Former Sleigh Corner Building, 158-164 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1964)



The Former Houston Building, 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kolle & Associates, 1965)



AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street (Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1965-69)



Former Dalgety House, 457-471 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp & Walker, 1966-68)



Former State Saving Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1967-68)



Royal Insurance Group Building, 430-442 Collins Street (Yuncken Freeman, 196)



Former AMP Building, 344-350 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1966-68)



Equitable House, 335-349 Little Collins Street (unknown architect, 1968)



Former Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street (Meldrum & Partners with Peddle Thorp Walker, 1968-70)



Former Methodist Church Centre, 130-134 Little Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1966-67)



Cowan House, 457-469 Little Collins Street (E & G Kolle, 1969)



Lonsdale Exchange, 447-553 Lonsdale Street
(Commonwealth Department of Works, 1969)



Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William
Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



Former Bryson Centre, 174-192 Exhibition Street
(Perot Lyon Timlock & Kesa, 1970-72)



Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building,
359-373 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon,
c1972-75)



Nubrick House, 269-275 William Street (Buchan
Laird & Buchan, 1972)



Former Law Department Building, 221-231 Queen
Street (Fischer Group, 1972)



Former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch, 85-91 Queen Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1973)



Former MLC Building, 303-317 Collins Street (Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, c1970-1973)



Office Building, 589-603 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp de Preu, 1973-75)

Analysis

In its early use of a non-loadbearing precast concrete panel façade system, the former Legal & General House at 375-383 Collins Street is comparable to a number of other buildings in central Melbourne constructed at a similar time. It is particularly comparable with the Royal Insurance Group Building at 430-442 Collins Street (interim HO1010) and the Scottish Amicable Building at 128-146 Queen Street (HO1213). It shares with these examples characteristics consistent with the Post-War Modernist style, including concrete post and slab construction, a non-loadbearing precast concrete panel façade with a repetitive modular geometry and a double or triple height street level undercroft and colonnade (altered for the subject building). The façade panels of the former Legal & General House have a more pronounced appearance than the abovementioned examples, although on close inspection reveal fine detailing in the mosaic-tiled wall surfaces.

The former Legal & General House is also comparable with other above buildings as an early example of a high-rise commercial building constructed following the abolition of the 40-metre height limit for buildings in the city centre.

The buildings above almost all share a history of construction for large insurance, assurance or banking organisations, and reflect the increased economic activity of the 1950s-70s in Melbourne that facilitated the construction of new bank buildings and the headquarters of national companies and corporations, including insurance companies. In Melbourne this activity was concentrated in the traditional centre of commerce and finance, west of Elizabeth Street in Queen and Collins streets, established from the late nineteenth century. The comparative examples including the subject building reflect this pattern of activity.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓ **CRITERION A**
Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).

CRITERION B
Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).

CRITERION C
Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).

✓ **CRITERION D**
Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).

✓ **CRITERION E**
Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).

✓ **CRITERION F**
Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)

CRITERION G
Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).

CRITERION H
Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-3)	No
TO BE INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

OTHER

N/A

REFERENCES

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'Queen Street looking south showing Prell's Buildings' c1913-14, State Library Victoria (SLV): Street scenes of Melbourne H89.106/8, accessed online 9 April 2019.

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PREVIOUS STUDIES

**Central Activities District
Conservation Study 1985** Ungraded

**Central City Heritage
Review 1993** Ungraded

**Review of Heritage
overlay listings in the
CBD 2002** Ungraded

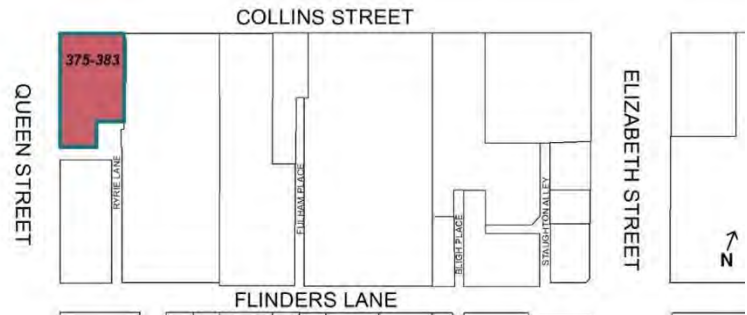
**Central City Heritage
Review 2011** Ungraded

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Former Legal & General House



PS ref no: HO1323XXXX



What is significant?

The former Legal & General House at 375-383 Collins Street, Melbourne, built 1967, is significant.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original form and scale;
- eOriginal modular composition of façades comprising precast concrete panels with inset windows;

- ~~e~~Original external materials including mosaic tiles, glazing, remaining fabric of the original colonnade; ~~and,~~
- ~~f~~'Floating' roof slab supported by columns.

Later alterations, particularly at street level, are not significant.

How it is significant?

The former Legal & General House at 375-383 Collins Street is of historic, representative, aesthetic and technical significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

The former Legal & General House is historically significant for the evidence it provides of Melbourne's postwar development and rapid growth of corporate architecture. Constructed in 1967 to a design by architects Bernard Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking, the building demonstrates the pattern in 1950s-70s' Melbourne of increased economic activity that facilitated the construction of new bank buildings and headquarters of national and international companies and corporations. Many of these companies were banking, insurance and assurance related. In Melbourne this activity was concentrated west of Elizabeth Street in Queen and Collins streets from the late nineteenth century. Legal & General House is located within this precinct, occupying the site of the earlier 1887 Prell's Buildings. The Prell's Buildings were occupied by commercial agencies including North British & Mercantile Insurance, and the Australian Provincial Assurance Association and were owned by Legal & General Assurance Society from 1954. (Criterion A)

The former Legal & General House is significant as a highly intact example of a Post-War Modernist style commercial building in central Melbourne. The building exhibits key characteristics of the style, including concrete post and slab construction, a non-loadbearing precast concrete panel façade with a repetitive modular geometry, and a double height street level undercroft and colonnade. Although the undercroft and colonnade have been altered in part, and are partially obscured, original fabric remains which enables the original building form and style at ground level to be appreciated. The former Legal & General House is also representative of the early wave of high-rise commercial buildings constructed following the abolition of the 40-metre (132-foot) height limit for buildings in the city centre. (Criterion D)

The former Legal & General House is significant for the retention of fine original detailing, including original mosaic-tiled wall surfaces, and copper tinted glazing which was noted at the time of its completion as creating a coppery glow to the façade. The glazing was also noted at the time as innovative, designed for sun and glare protection. The building's height and the aesthetic effect of the glazing were key factors contributing to the building's distinctive aesthetic prominence in Melbourne's changing skyline. (Criteria E and F)

Primary source

~~Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)~~ [Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\) \(updated March 2022\)](#)

SITE NAME	Atlas Assurance Building [also known as Praemium House]
STREET ADDRESS	404-406 Collins Street, Melbourne
PROPERTY ID	102129



SURVEY DATE: May 2017

SURVEY BY: Context

HERITAGE INVENTORY N/A**EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY** Yes – interim controls HO1008**PLACE TYPE** Individual Heritage Place**PROPOSED CATEGORY** Significant**FORMER GRADE** C**DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:** H Garnet Alsop & Partners**BUILDER:** E.A Watts**DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:** Postwar Period (1945-1965)**DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:** 1958-61

THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations.	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Business and finance

LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Offices
1920s	Offices
1960s	Offices – services

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Extent of overlay: refer to map

SUMMARY

The former Atlas Assurance Building is an 11-storey steel framed reinforced concrete office building. It is an early example of curtain wall construction. Designed by H Garnet Alsop & Partners, it was refurbished in 1993 with the facade refurbished in 2001. It features a bronze statue of Atlas at the front of the building that was associated with the Mutual Assurance Society of Victoria.

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

Business and finance in the postwar period

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical

presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17). Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

SITE HISTORY

The site on which the former Atlas Assurance building is located was formerly occupied by the National Mutual Assurance Society of Victoria. The company began in 1869 in Melbourne and expanded across Australia throughout the early 1900s, amalgamating with many smaller mutual societies ('National Mutual Life Association of Australasia' 2011).

This steel-framed and reinforced concrete building was erected in 1957-8 for the Atlas Assurance Co Ltd by builders EA Watts Pty. Ltd., initially as basement, ground, mezzanine and six upper levels, to the design of architects and engineers' H Garnett Alsop & Partners. The estimated cost was £310,000. Within two years of completion, another four levels were added to take it to just over the city's building height limit of 40 metres (132 feet) (Figure 1). The same architects and builder were commissioned to complete the additional storeys.

The Atlas Company was a successful insurance company founded in 1808, with international branches that followed its establishment in Britain. 404-406 Collins Street was the company's head

office for both New Zealand and Australia. The building's construction coincided with the erection of a number of large insurance and assurance company offices nearby in what was Melbourne's financial centre.



Figure 1. 404-406 Colins Street in 1961. (Source: Fowler 1961, SLV H92.20/7132 [copyright](#))

Howard Garnet Alsop, architect

In March 1926, 17-year old Howard Garnet Alsop became an articled pupil of his architect uncle. Between 1930 and 1932, Alsop studied at the University of Melbourne Architectural Atelier and was registered as an architect in December 1931. After working as a draftsman with the Melbourne Electricity Supply Company he gained a position in the office of Godfrey and Spowers in 1934. (Built Heritage 2017).

In April 1936, Alsop left Melbourne for an extended overseas tour of England (where he worked in the London office of Wallis, Gilbert and Partners), Germany, Scandinavia, Russia and the USA. After returning to Australia in July 1937, he opened an office in Melbourne. His first client was Ivan Holyman of ANA, who commissioned the young architect to design the new airline terminal and hangar complex at Essendon Aerodrome. Subsequently appointed as the company's official architect, Alsop continued to design buildings for ANA until the airline merged with Ansett in 1957 (Built Heritage 2017).

In 1946, Alsop renamed his practice H Garnet Alsop and Partners, architects and engineers. The firm thrived in the postwar era, with Alsop's practice expanding to include factories, multi-storey city offices, and health-related projects. (Built Heritage 2017).

In 1978, Alsop retired as senior partner of the firm bearing his name. The business was carried on by four remaining partners: long-time staff members Hugh Pettit and Ian Freeland, and Alsop's two architect sons, David and John. Alsop's brother Dennis and other son Rodney also remained involved, in their respective capacities of consulting engineer and quantity surveyor. In 1982, the office merged with another long-running practice of pre-war origin, Leighton Irwin Australia, to create a new entity, Leighton Irwin-Garnet Alsop Pty Ltd, abbreviated as the Irwin-Alsop Group.

Howard Garnet Alsop died on 3 October 1994, aged 85 years. His practice continued to operate as the Irwin-Alsop Group until 2008, when it merged with Whitefield McQueen to form Whitefield

McQueen Irwin Alsop, or WMIA. The practice was subsequently absorbed in 2012 by Group GSA, a large international and multi-disciplinary practice that continues to this day (Built Heritage 2017).

SITE DESCRIPTION

The former Atlas Assurance Building is an 11-storey steel framed reinforced concrete office building with a basement and mezzanine. An early example of curtain wall construction, it incorporates marble spandrel panels within the facade design (Figure 1). The façade curtain wall system is constructed of anodised aluminium framed with marble spandrels and 'Polyglass' (originally specified as 'Thermopane') double glazed polished plate window units.

Internally, the service core is arranged along the west wall with stairs at either end and a light court midway on the east wall. Suspended plaster ceilings are used throughout with air-conditioning as an advance on the natural ventilation. The floor slabs are turned up at the façade edge to provide fire-rated spandrels to sill height with the sills finished in reconstructed granite.

The ground level has a grand folding glass door set across the entry at the west end of the façade, leading to a glass lobby screen and terrazzo paving beyond. It features a bronze statue of Atlas at the front of the building, originally part of the Mutual Assurance Society of Victoria building that formerly occupied the site.

INTEGRITY

The ground level interior and façade were modified in the 1980s and the statue of Atlas relocated to a niche at the west end (although a panel on the wall states that the statue is in its original position). However, the upper-level façade remains generally as built. The building was refurbished internally in 1993 and the façade in 2001.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The former Atlas Assurance Building at 404-406 Collins Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of 1950s multi-storey commercial building design.

There are a number of buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the former Atlas Assurance Building. These are detailed below.

State-significant places

A comparative example in the City of Melbourne which is located immediately adjacent to the Hoddle Grid is ICI House, 1-4 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1958). This place is included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR H0786).

Locally-significant places

Precinct Heritage Overlay

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from the early postwar period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme. Those from the 1950s that are included in the Heritage Overlay are currently included as part of Heritage Precincts, but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places. These places are:



Former Gilbert Court, 100-104 Collins Street (John A La Gerche, 1954-55) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Hosie's Hotel, 1-5 Elizabeth Street & 288-290 Flinders Street (Mussen McKay & Potter, 1954-55), included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct as a Significant place.



Coates Building, 18-22 Collins Street (John A La Gerche, 1958-59) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Bank of Adelaide Building, 265-269 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton & Lobb, 1959-60) included in HO502 The Block Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Allans Building, 276-278 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Merton and Lobb with Charles N Hollinshed, 1956-57) included in HO502 The Block Precinct as a Significant place.

Other Examples

Despite the demolition of many 1950s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the initial period of curtain wall construction in Melbourne and demonstrate similar characteristics to the subject building. The following examples are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as individually significant heritage places as part of the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review:



Lauren's House, 414-416 Lonsdale Street (Harold Bloom, 1956) (Interim HO1254).



Former Batman Automatic Telephone Exchange, 376 Flinders Lane (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1957).



Former London Assurance House, 468-470 Bourke Street (B Evans & Partners, 1960) (Interim HO1006).



Former AMP Building, 402-408 Lonsdale Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1956-59).



Former Ajax House, 103-105 Queen Street (HD Berry, 1956).



HC Sleigh Building, 166-172 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1953-55).



Coles & Garrard Building, 376-378 Bourke Street
(Meldrum & Noad, 1957).

Canton Insurance Building, 43-51 Queen Street (Bates
Smart & McCutcheon, 1957).

Analysis

404-406 Collins Street, has been refurbished at ground level and the interior, a common occurrence with many postwar office buildings. It is however more intact than its neighbour at 410 Collins Street and 170 Queen Street where there has been a complete renewal of the curtain wall façade. 404-406 Collins Street is still legible as a commercial office of the 1950s, retaining its façade and scale. It is an intact representative example of a 1950s office building and very few of these places are yet to be included on the Heritage Overlay.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓ **CRITERION A**
Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).

CRITERION B
Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).

CRITERION C
Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).

✓ **CRITERION D**
Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).

✓ **CRITERION E**
Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).

CRITERION F
Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)

CRITERION G
Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).

CRITERION H
Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-3)	No
TO BE INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

OTHER

N/A

REFERENCES

Contextual History references contained within *City of Melbourne Hoddle Grid Heritage Review: Postwar Thematic Environmental History 1945-1975*

Fowler, Lyle 1961, 'Atlas Assurance building, 406 Collins Street', State Library of Victoria: Harold Paynting collection. H series, accessed online June 2019.

Goad, P 1999, *Melbourne Architecture*.

Goad, P & Willis, J(eds.) 2012, *An Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Cambridge University Press.

Google Street View 2017, 404-406 Collins Street, Google Maps, accessed online 27 June 2017.

Lewis, Miles 2012 'Curtain Wall' in Goad, Philip & Willis, Julie (eds) 2012, *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Marsden, Susan 2000, *Urban Heritage: the rise and postwar development of Australia's capital city centres*, Australian Council of National Trusts and Australian Heritage Commission, Canberra.

'National Mutual Life Association of Australasia (1869-)' 2011, via *Trove*, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.party-636066>, accessed online 12 June 2019.

National Trust Classification Report

National Trust of Australia Victoria (NTAV) 2014, *Melbourne's Marvellous Modernism*, National Trust (Victoria), Melbourne.

The following sources and data were used for this assessment (Graeme Butler, 2011). Note that the citation prepared in 2011 did not provide in text referencing.

Storey, Rohan 2008, 'Skyscrapers' in *eMelbourne*, School of Historical & Philosophical Studies, The University of Melbourne, <http://www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM01383b.htm>, accessed 13 June 2017.

General sources

The following data was typically drawn from:

Historic Buildings Preservation Council reports on the Melbourne Central Business District from the 1970s;

Melbourne City Council on-line i-Heritage database;

Mahlstedt fire insurance map series held in the State Library of Victoria collection and Melbourne University Archives;

Daily newspaper reports such as 'The Argus';

Australian Architecture Index (AAI), prepared by Professor Miles Lewis and others;

Melbourne City Council building application drawings and files held at Melbourne City Council and the Victorian Public Records Office.

Twentieth Century Architecture Register of Royal Australian Institute of Architects

Graeme Butler, 1982-3, Twentieth Century Architecture Register of Royal Australian Institute of Architects: cites Building Permit Applications;

Building Permit Applications

9/6/1957, 31535 £310,000 ;

24/10/1960, 34487 added storeys to 406, £238,000. (not at VPRO)

National Trust of Australia (Vic) File B5345

Contains article in Architecture in Australia June 1959 David Saunders, 'Office Buildings in Melbourne' examining recent office construction types and costs.

'Building Ideas' 1965 guide

March 1965: included on the architectural guide for the Australian architectural convention- 'Royal Exchange Assurance 406 Collins Street H. Garnet Alsop and Partners, Six storeys, 1958; additional four floors, 1961.

The Argus

Tuesday 3 February 1953 City Personal

Tuesday 10 February 1948 City Personal

Monday 15 September 1902

Sands & McDougall Melbourne or Victorian Directories

PREVIOUS STUDIES

**Central Activities District
Conservation Study 1985** C

**Central City Heritage
Study Review 1993** C

**Review of Heritage
overlay listings in the
CBD 2002** C

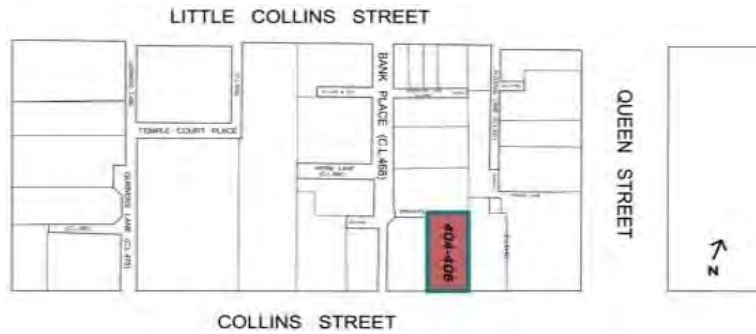
**Central City Heritage
Review 2011** C

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Former Atlas Assurance Building



PS ref no: ~~HOXXXX~~HO1008



What is significant?

The former Atlas Assurance building at 404-406 Collins Street, Melbourne, completed in 1958-1961 to a design by H Garnet Alsop.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing; ~~and~~
- The building's high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations, particularly at street level, are not significant.

How it is significant?

The former Atlas Assurance building at 404-406 Collins Street is of historical, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

The former Atlas Assurance building is historically significant for its association with postwar development, and with the expansion of large companies undertaking construction and naming rights of new city office buildings as a form of promotion and fund investment. A related object, the Federation-era statue of Atlas is historically significant as an artefact from the Mutual Assurance Society of Victoria that occupied the same site. (Criterion A)

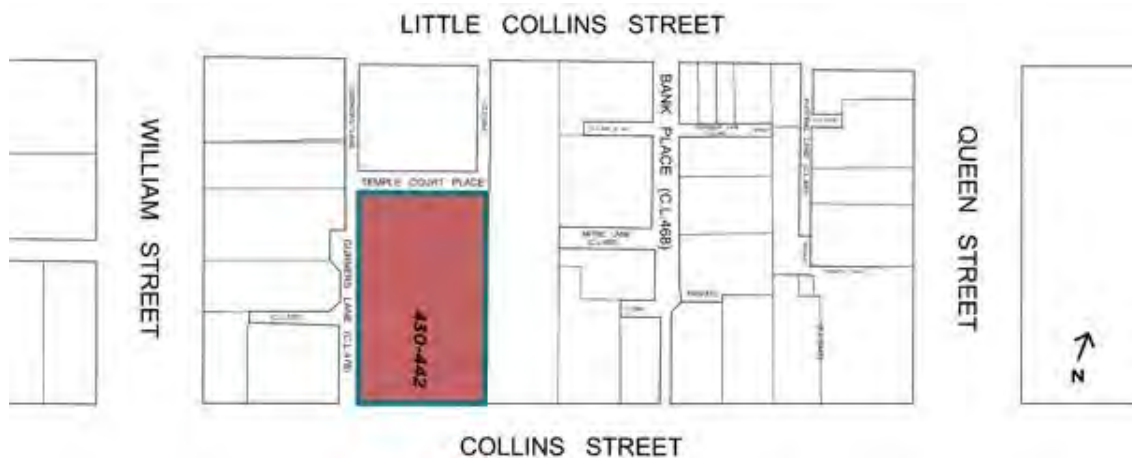
The former Atlas Assurance building is significant as a relatively intact, curtain-walled office building from the postwar period and demonstrating the style embraced by local architects by the late 1950s. In particular it employs a curtain-wall façade that makes the transition from the all-glass wall to the combination of solid spandrels of masonry, coloured glass or enameled metal sheeting of the 1960s. (Criterion D)

Aesthetically, the former Atlas Assurance building presents a sealed aluminium-framed curtain wall just a few years after the first multi-storey glass box was built in Australia. The use of marble spandrels on the curtain wall and granite at the base of the building emulated in a modern manner the stone clad classical facades favoured previously by financial institutions. Attributes of the building that demonstrate aesthetic value include the façade curtain wall system with anodised aluminium frames with marble spandrels and 'Polyglass' double glazed polished plate windows, all of which were remarked upon in the architectural periodical *Cross-section*. (Criterion E)

Primary source

[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\)](#)~~Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)~~ (updated March 2022)

SITE NAME	Royal Insurance Group building
STREET ADDRESS	430-442 Collins Street, Melbourne
PROPERTY ID	102124



SURVEY DATE: May 2017

SURVEY BY: Context

HERITAGE INVENTORY N/A

EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY Yes – interim controls HO1010

PLACE TYPE Individual Heritage Place

PROPOSED CATEGORY Significant

FORMER GRADE A

DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST: Yuncken Freeman

BUILDER: E A Watts Pty Ltd

DEVELOPMENT PERIOD: Postwar Period (1945-1965)

DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION: 1966

THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations.	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style 1.9 Beyond the curtain wall
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Business and finance

LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Hotel
1920s	Hotel
1960s	Office

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Extent of overlay: Refer to map

SUMMARY

The Royal Insurance Group building is a 17-storey modern office building designed by Yuncken Freeman Architects and built in 1966. It represents the continuing importance of the banking, finance and insurance industries in the remaking of Melbourne in the postwar period.

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

Beyond the curtain wall

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding,

screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

Business and finance in the postwar period

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17).

Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

SITE HISTORY

In 1860, Edward Scott purchased the Clarendon Hotel and constructed the much grander Scott's Hotel on the site. After being purchased by the Royal Insurance Co. in 1961, Scott's Hotel was demolished the following year to make way for the current office tower (Spicer 2008). The Royal Insurance Company Ltd was established in London in 1845. By the 1960s, they had built up national head offices, branches and subsidiaries in Australia.

The company's new head office was designed by Yuncken Freeman Architects Pty. Ltd., and constructed by builders, E A Watts Pty Ltd. The total cost was estimated at £3 million.

Yuncken Freeman was awarded the Victorian Architecture Medal in 1967 for 430-442 Collins Street. The building in 1967 can be seen in Figure 1. The building is included on the Australian Institute of Architects Twentieth Century Buildings Register.



Figure 1. Royal Insurance Group building in 1967. (Source: Fowler 1967, SLV H92.20/9742 [copyright](#)).

Yuncken Freeman, architects

In the 1960s Melbourne-based practice Yuncken Freeman was one of the largest architectural firms in Australia, with a reputation for modern, high quality design and meticulous detailing. The firm originated in 1933 when Otto Abrecht Yuncken (1903-1951) and brothers John (1898-1962) and Tom Freeman (1904-1971) set up practice. In the 1930s the firm's work concentrated on hospital design and high-quality residential work. The commercial and corporate side of the business was built by Barry Patten (1927-2003) and John Gates (1924-1996), when they joined the firm as partners in 1951. Yuncken Freeman was the most successful and prolific architectural practice during the 1960s and 70s, designing many award-winning office buildings in the city. These included Eagle House at 473 Bourke Street, in 1971, (VHR1807, HO901) the BHP tower at 130-148 William Street (VHR1699, HO767) and the Royal Insurance building at 430-442 Collins Street (1965). Yuncken Freeman had an unequalled national reputation for superb architectural detailing and classically simple forms. The firm continued until the late 1980s, completing work for the University of Melbourne, amongst many large institutional and corporate clients (Goad & Willis eds., 2012:781-2).

SITE DESCRIPTION

The Royal Insurance Company head office is a 17-storey office building with three basement levels of parking and ground level retail. Designed by Yuncken Freeman Architects it was built in 1965. The building was awarded the RVIA Medal for outstanding building of the year in 1967. It was refurbished between 1994-1996.

Reconstructed black granite gives the tower its characteristic dark profile where the stone grains are cast into pre-glazed concrete panels with structural ribs at the vertical joints. The separation of each component, by sophisticated detailing, follows the Modernist principles of the building as an assembly of functional parts rather than a decorated monolith.

The building has a podium with giant colonnades that transition smoothly to the tower above. This remains legible across the façades as a series of tall plate glass windows. Internally, the lofty space created was used skilfully to accommodate a mezzanine level.

INTEGRITY

The building was refurbished in 1994-1996 but still retains its integrity from the exterior.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The Royal Insurance Group building is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of 1960s to mid-1970s multi-storey building design. The structure, including the form at street level, remains highly intact to its original design.

There are a number of buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the Royal Insurance Group building. These are detailed below.

State-significant places

A small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne have been assessed as being of State-level significance and are included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). These include:

- Total House, 170-90 Russell Street (Bogle & Banfield 1964-65; VHR H2329 & HO1095)
- Former Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-44 Bourke Street (Peter Muller 1966-69)
- Victorian Government Offices, Treasury Reserve Precinct (Yuncken Freeman 1967-68 – outside the Hoddle Grid)
- Eagle House, 473 Bourke Street (Yuncken Freeman 1971-72; VHR H1807 & HO901)
- BHP House, 130-148 William Street (Yuncken Freeman 1969-72; VHR H1699 & HO767).

Locally-significant places

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from this period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme on a permanent basis. Those that are, are generally currently included within Heritage Precincts but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places, as follows:

Precinct Heritage Overlay



Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street, (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1974) included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct (Non-contributory).



Wales Corner, 221-231 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1964-66) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Swanston Street) Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, 251-257 Collins Street, (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 19741-73 included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Flinders Lane) (Non-contributory).

One individual heritage place recently included in a site-specific Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis is the Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1966) (HO1213):



Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

Other examples

Despite the demolition of many 1960s and 1970s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the advancement of construction techniques from the 1960s through to the mid 1970s and demonstrate the broad range of design approaches of the period. The podiums of the majority of these places have been modified at street level. Examples include:



Former RACV Club, 111-129 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961) (Interim HO1068)



Former Australia Pacific House, 136-144 Exhibition Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1975-78)



Office Building, 178-188 William Street (McIntyre & Partners, 1972-73)



Office Building, 516-520 Collins Street (architect unknown, c1974)



Former Guardian Building, 454-456 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1960-61)



Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building, 155-161 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961-62)



Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



MLA Building, 308-336 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1963)



Royal Mail House, 255-267 Bourke Street (D Graeme Lumsden, 1963)



Former Sleigh Corner Building, 158-164 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1964)



The Former Houston Building, 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kolle & Associates, 1965)



AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street (Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1965-69)



Former Dalgety House, 457-471 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp & Walker, 1966-68)



Former State Saving Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1967-68)



Former Legal & General House, 375-383 Collins Street (B Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking, 1967)



Former AMP Building, 344-350 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1966-68)



Equitable House, 335-349 Little Collins Street (unknown architect, 1968)



Former Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street (Meldrum & Partners with Peddle Thorp Walker, 1968-70)



Former Methodist Church Centre, 130-134 Little Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1966-67)



Cowan House, 457-469 Little Collins Street (E & G Kolle, 1969)



Lonsdale Exchange, 447-553 Lonsdale Street
(Commonwealth Department of Works, 1969)



Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William Street
(Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



Former Bryson Centre, 174-192 Exhibition Street
(Perrot Lyon Timlock & Kesa, 1970-72)



Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation
Building, 359-373 Collins Street (Bates Smart &
McCutcheon, c1972-75)



Nubrick House, 269-275 William Street (Buchan
Laird & Buchan, 1972)



Former Law Department Building, 221-231 Queen
Street (Fischer Group, 1972)



Former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch, 85-91 Queen Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1973)



Former MLC Building, 303-317 Collins Street (Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, c1970-1973)



Office Building, 589-603 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp de Preu, 1973-75)

Analysis

Yuncken Freeman's contribution to the design of commercial office buildings in Melbourne is unparalleled as they continued to define and re-define the way in which office buildings were formed and the expression of their facades presented. This has been recognised by numerous architectural awards. 430-442 Collins Street has survived relatively intact and continues to demonstrate the aesthetic values of its time.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓ **CRITERION A**
Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).

CRITERION B
Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).

CRITERION C
Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).

✓ **CRITERION D**
Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).

✓ **CRITERION E**
Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).

CRITERION F
Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)

CRITERION G
Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).

CRITERION H
Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-3)	No
TO BE INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

OTHER

N/A

REFERENCES

Clinch, R J 2012, 'The places we keep: the heritage studies of Victoria and outcomes for urban planners', PhD thesis, Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning, The University of Melbourne.

Contextual History references contained within *City of Melbourne Hoddle Grid Heritage Review: Postwar Thematic Environmental History 1945-1975*

Goad, P & Willis, J (eds.) 2012, *An Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Cambridge University Press

Fowler, Lyle 1967, 'Royal Insurance Group building', State Library of Victoria: Harold Paynting collection. H series, accessed online June 2019.

Marsden, Susan 2000, *Urban Heritage: the rise and postwar development of Australia's capital city centres*, Australian Council of National Trusts and Australian Heritage Commission, Canberra.

Spicer, Christopher J 2008, 'Scott's Hotel' *eMelbourne*, School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, The University of Melbourne, <http://www.emelbourne.net.au/>, accessed 21 June 2017.

The following sources and data were used for this assessment (Graeme Butler, 2011). Note that the citation prepared in 2011 did not provide in text referencing.

General sources

Historic Buildings Preservation Council reports on the Melbourne Central Business District from the 1970s;

Melbourne City Council on-line i-Heritage database;

Mahlstedt fire insurance map series held in the State Library of Victoria collection and Melbourne University Archives;

Australian Architecture Index (AAI), prepared by Professor Miles Lewis and others;

Melbourne City Council building application drawings and files held at Melbourne City Council and the Victorian Public Records Office.

Historic Buildings Preservation Council

Keith and John Reid, CBD Study Area 7 Historic Buildings Preservation Council, 1976

State Library of Victoria collection

Royal Insurance Group office building, 430-442 Collins Street, Melbourne [picture]

* Author/Creator: Wolfgang Sievers 1913-2007;

* Contributor(s): Yuncken Freeman Architects;

* Date(s): 1965

Part of a series showing immaculate interiors, furnishings and spaces

Twentieth Century Architecture Register

Graeme Butler, 1982-3, Twentieth Century Architecture Register of Royal Australian Institute of Architects: architects as Yuncken Freeman Architects Pty. Ltd.; RAIA (Vic) medal 1967 General Building; Building Permit Application 17/8/1962, 35720; 9/2/1965 for signs indicating open; RAIA

(vice) Library of Works card; H. Weston, Summary of Awards for Architecture, report to the R.A.I.A (Victoria) on awards given by the R.A.I.A. (Vic.) and R.V.I.A., (unpublished): 4; periodical articles 1/2/1965 (illus.), 1/5/1967. Est Cost £1,690,000; Roderick Ross & Associates consulting mechanical engineers; Frank C Dixon structural engineer; Lincolne Demaine Scott as electrical engineers; Rider Hunt & Partners QS. Panels have reconstructed black granite finish; typical floor area 12,036 square feet; floor to floor 12'.

Victorian Year Book (VYB) 1972: 662

National Trust of Australia (Vic):430-444 Collins Street, MELBOURNE, Melbourne City

File Number: B6854

Sands & McDougall Melbourne or Victorian Directories

Where required directory extracts were obtained chiefly from Sands & McDougall Melbourne or Victorian Directories dating from the 1850s to 1974.

(D1961 430-444 Scott's Hotel, Gullifer, Miss H confectioner, Mitchell's Dry Cleaning, W Parke Shoe repair, D.J. Buchanan)

Other sources

Goad, P., 1999 *Melbourne Architecture*

Goad, P. & Willis, J.(eds.), 2012, *An Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Cambridge University Press

Marsden, Susan 2000, *Urban Heritage: the rise and postwar development of Australia's capital city centres*, Australian Council of National Trusts and Australian Heritage Commission, Canberra.

National Trust of Victoria, Australia, 2014, *Melbourne's Marvellous Modernism, A Comparative Analysis of Post-War Modern Architecture in Melbourne's CBD, 1955 -1975*

PREVIOUS STUDIES

**Central Activities District
Conservation Study 1985** B

**Central City Heritage
Review 1993** B

**Review of Heritage
overlay listings in the
CBD 2002** B

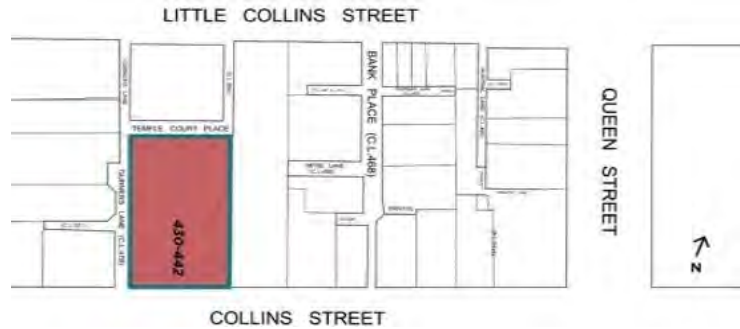
**Central City Heritage
Review 2011** A

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Royal Insurance Group Building



PS ref no: HO1010XXXX



What is significant?

The Royal Insurance Group Company's head office at 430-442 Collins Street, Melbourne, completed in 1966 and designed by Yuncken Freeman.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing; and
- The building's high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations, particularly at street level, are not significant.

How it is significant?

The Royal Insurance Group building at 430-442 Collins Street is of local historic, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

The Royal Insurance Group building is historically significant for its association with the rapid growth of high-rise office buildings in the 1960s-mid 1970s postwar period, and with the expansion of large companies undertaking construction and naming rights of new city office buildings as a form of promotion and fund investment. (Criterion A)

The Royal Insurance Group building is a fine, intact and representative example of a modern office tower, many of which were designed by the prominent architectural practice of Yuncken Freeman during the 1960s. As one of the largest architectural firms in Australia, with a reputation for modern, high quality design and meticulous detailing, Yuncken Freeman were one of the most successful and prominent

architectural practices during the 1960s and 70s. The Royal Insurance Company's head office building is a fine example of its class, having retained most of its original external features. (Criterion D)

The Royal Insurance Group building is aesthetically significant for its attributes that include the black granite pre-glazed concrete panels that are expressed in the façade, its podium level of tall glazing carried on columns and its mezzanine level. The aesthetic value of the building is expressed through its highly repetitive façade reflecting the construction system but exploiting this through refined detailing of the jointing design and the colour and finish of the concrete panels. The Royal Insurance Group building is recognised through the awarding of the Victorian Architecture Medal in 1967 and by inclusion on the Australian Institute of Architects Twentieth Century Buildings Register. (Criterion E)

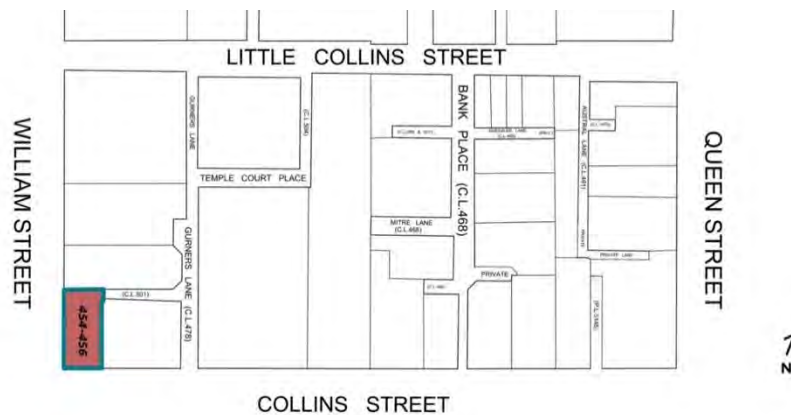
Primary source

[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\)](#)~~Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)~~ [Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\) \(updated March 2022\)](#)

SITE NAME Former Guardian Building [also known as Christie Offices (current name)]

STREET ADDRESS 454-456 Collins Street, Melbourne

PROPERTY ID 102122



SURVEY DATE: October 2019

SURVEY BY: GJM Heritage

HERITAGE INVENTORY No

EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY No

PLACE TYPE Individual Heritage Place

PROPOSED CATEGORY Significant

FORMER GRADE C

DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST: Bates Smart & McCutcheon

BUILDER: J C Taylor & Sons

DEVELOPMENT PERIOD: Postwar Period (1945-1975)

DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION: 1960-1961

THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation focused on the postwar history of the site and did not address associations with Aboriginal people or organisations	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style 1.9 Beyond the curtain wall
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Business and finance

LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Office, Studio, Caretaker, Merchant
1920s	Office, Studio, Caretaker, Merchant, Workshop, Hairdresser, Retail
1960s	Under construction

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Extent of overlay: To extent of property boundary

SUMMARY

The Former Guardian Building on the corner of William and Collins streets was built for owners, Guardian Assurance Co Ltd, in 1960-61, to a design by architects Bates Smart & McCutcheon.

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

Beyond the curtain wall

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding, screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

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The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17). Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

SITE HISTORY

The Guardian Building on the corner of William and Collins streets was built for owners Guardian Assurance Co Ltd in 1960-61, to a design by architects Bates Smart & McCutcheon (Goad 2004:180). The Guardian Assurance Co occupied an earlier building on the site from c1955, also called the 'Guardian Building', before redeveloping the site. The company appears to have had an earlier presence in the area, occupying an adjacent property 452 Collins Street from c1910 to c1920 (S&Mc).

At the time of construction, the Guardian insurance group had long-established branches in all Australian states. An article published in *The Canberra Times* in June 1960 (18 Jun 1960:11) reported that a Canberra office had just opened, a large building was planned for Sydney, and 'construction of a new 10-storey building at the corner of Collins and William Streets has just been started for the group'.

In September 1959, the University of Melbourne's Department of Architecture publication *Cross-Section* reported that a new building was to be erected for Guardian Assurance at the subject site, at a cost of £350,000, to be faced with Stawell freestone. The City of Melbourne received a building permit application for the multi-storey office building in March 1960 (BAI). W E Bassett & Partners were the mechanical engineers and J C Taylor & Sons the builders. The total cost of the building was approximately £500,000 (*Cross-Section*, Apr 1962).

Photos of the newly completed building showed its external form including the entrance and foyer (Figure 3 - Figure 5). *Cross-Section* published an article on the newly completed building in April 1962, providing the opinion that:

*This is prestige-type architecture, conservative, dignified, sober, and rather stuffy.
Handsomely proportioned windows sit in a natural stone façade.*

The article stated that the building was serviced by air conditioning that was a 'high velocity perimeter induction system with individual controls below window sills', and was built with double glazed windows with heat resistant glass in the outer panes (Figure 6).

The 1965, the Sands & McDougall Directory listed the 'Guardian Building' at 454-456 Collins Street as being occupied by Guardian Assurance Co Ltd, amongst other companies. In 2019 the entrance on the Collins Street elevation bears the name 'Christie Offices'.

Bates Smart & McCutcheon

Bates, Smart & McCutcheon was formed when Osborn McCutcheon joined the existing firm of Bates & Smart in 1926. Bates & Smart had itself been born out of previous iterations of a firm that could be traced back to Reed & Barnes, making it one of the oldest practices in the country (Goad 2012:72). By the 1960s the firm had become one of Australia's largest architectural firms. It exists today as Bates Smart (Goad 2012:72).

During the 1930s, Bates, Smart & McCutcheon had earned a reputation for designing Georgian-style residences, but also went on to win RIVA awards for their work on the AMP Building in Collins Street (1926-31), Buckley & Nunn Building in Bourke Street (now David Jones, 1933), and the Second Church of Christ Scientist in Camberwell (1936-37).

By the 1950s, Bates, Smart & McCutcheon had become Australia's 'expert' in high-rise office buildings design (Goad 2012:73). Much of their work at this time was large structures with glass curtain walls. In Melbourne this was exemplified by ICI House, which broke the city's existing 132-foot (40m) height limit in 1955-8 (Goad 2012:73). Other work completed by the firm in the 1950s included the first of the Sleigh Buildings at 158-172 Queen Street Melbourne (1953-55 & 1964), Union House at 43-51 Queen Street Melbourne (1957) and the AMP Building at 402-408 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne (1956-58).

Bates, Smart & McCutcheon continued to expand into the 1960s and 70s, with its design approach shifting from glazed curtain walls to facades of artificial stone or prefabricated concrete panels. Works in Melbourne during this period included AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, Bourke Street (1965-69) in association with US firm, Skidmore Owings and Merrill; the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61); the Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building at 155-161 Queen Street (1961-62) and the Methodist Church Centre at 130-134 Little Collins Street (1966-67) with F C Armstrong.

In the 1970s the firm designed the Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street, Melbourne (c1972-75); the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73) and the double tower and plaza complex of Collins Place, Collins Street (1970-80), undertaken in collaboration with international architecture practice, I M Pei. Other notable works by the firm include the large collaborative designs of Melbourne Central with Kisho Kurokawa (1983-92) and Federation Square with Lab Architecture Studio (1997-2002) (Goad 2012:74).

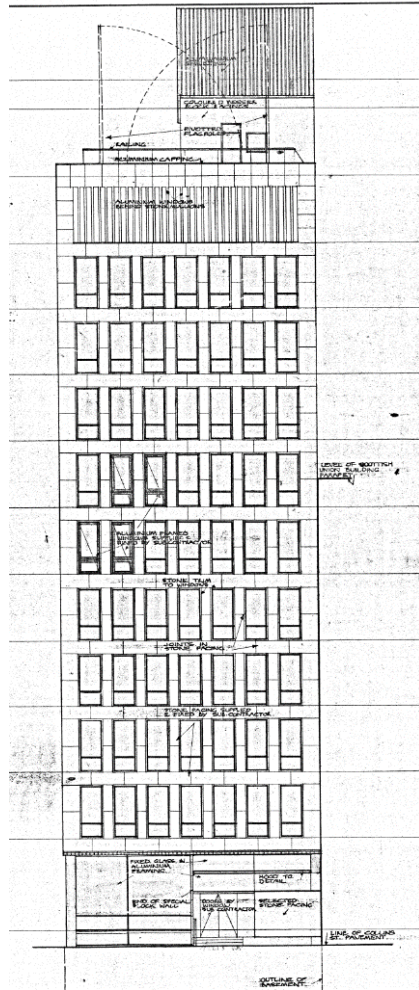


Figure 1. South elevation, fronting Collins Street. Drawings by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, dated 1960 (BAP).

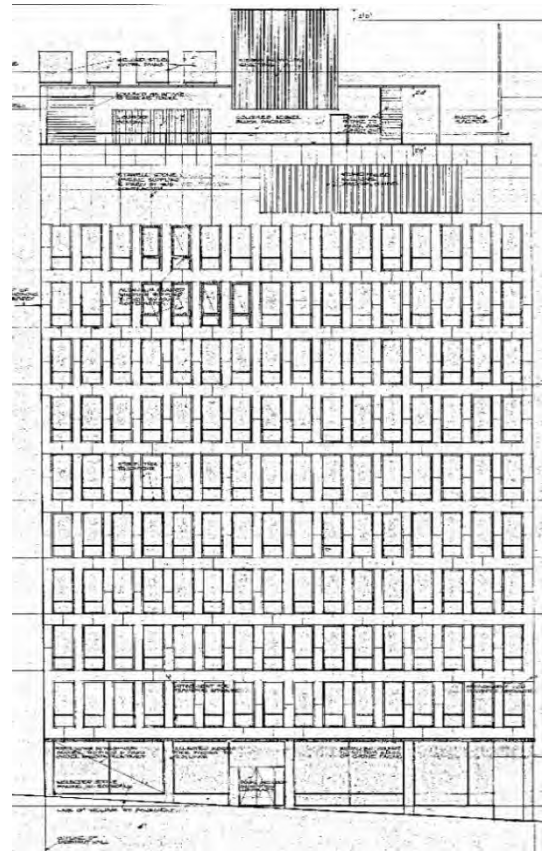


Figure 2. West elevation. Drawings by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, dated 1960 (BAP).



Figure 3. The newly completed building for Guardian Assurance, photo dated 1961 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/58).



Figure 4. The entrance to the building in 1961 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/57).



Figure 5. The foyer to building, photo dated 1961 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/60).



Figure 6. An image of the building published in 1962 (*Cross-Section* No. 114, Apr 1962).



Figure 7. Detail of a 1967 photo showing the corner building (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/402).



Figure 8. The building in 1982 (City of Melbourne Libraries online Heritage Collection, Reference no. Butler16202).

SITE DESCRIPTION

The Former Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street is a 10-storey commercial building located at the north-east corner of Collins and William streets. Constructed in 1960-61 to a design by Bates, Smart & McCutcheon, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

The building is rectangular in plan with a broad frontage to William Street and a narrow frontage containing the main entrance to Collins Street. Both facades are treated in an identical manner with floors above street level containing rows of rectangular windows, with opaque black spandrel panel, set in a grid-like pattern. Minor facades to the north and east are largely obscured by adjacent buildings, however a vertical strip of openable windows in the east façade is visible at the end of a narrow lane which is accessed from Collins Street, via Gurners Lane. These facades are of concrete block infill with render applied to surface columns and beams.

The building is of concrete encased steel column and beam construction with facades of stone-faced precast concrete panels and individual inset aluminium-framed windows (some with central pivot) with slim expressed stone frame. In contrast, the upper storey of the building incorporates a set of closely spaced stone mullions which mask aluminium-framed windows behind. Originally housing the board room and other facilities, this detailing continues across the Collins Street façade and, in part, the William Street façade.

At street level, facades are fully glazed between solid piers. An inscribed edge to the stone-faced spandrel above is a simple, yet distinctive, detail.

The building has been reglazed at the ground level in both Collins and William Streets. Originally recessed behind the line of the upper floors, the Collins Street façade at ground level has been reconstructed in line with the face of the building above. The Collins Street entrance remains in the same location however it has been modified. Street level glazing in William Street has been replaced and intermediate stone-clad piers have been removed.

INTEGRITY

The Former Guardian Building, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building above street level, remains highly intact to its original construction in 1960-61. Works to the building at street level has altered the original design of this frontage.

Overall, the building retains a high degree of architectural integrity to the Post-War Modernist style in fabric, form and detail. While the building has undergone alterations at street level, these do not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the place as a fine example of a Post-War Modernist multi-storey commercial building.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The Former Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of 1960s to mid 1970s multi-storey commercial building design. The building's two grid-like curtain walls of regularly spaced rectangular windows set in plain facades of stone-faced precast concrete panels, and contrasting upper level of closely spaced stone mullions, can be clearly observed from both Collins Street and William Street. Despite the redesign of the street-level facade, the upper facades of the Former Guardian Building remain highly intact to their original design.

There are a number of buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the Former Guardian Building. These are detailed below.

State-significant places

A small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne have been assessed as being of State-level significance and are included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). These include:

- Total House, 170-90 Russell Street (Bogle & Banfield 1964-65; VHR H2329 & HO1095)
- Former Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-44 Bourke Street (Peter Muller 1966-69)
- Victorian Government Offices, Treasury Reserve Precinct (Yuncken Freeman 1967-68 – outside the Hoddle Grid)
- Eagle House, 473 Bourke Street (Yuncken Freeman 1971-72; VHR H1807 & HO901)
- BHP House, 130-148 William Street (Yuncken Freeman 1969-72; VHR H1699 & HO767).

Locally-significant places

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from this period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme on a permanent basis. Those that are, are generally currently included within Heritage Precincts but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places, as follows:

Precinct Heritage Overlay



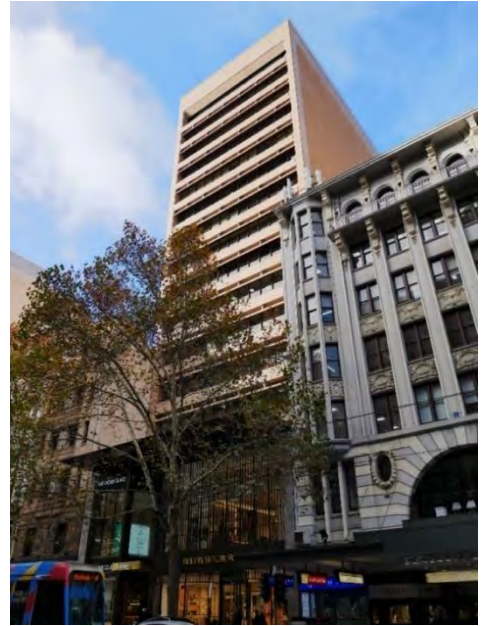
Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street, (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1974) included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct (Non-contributory).



Wales Corner, 221-231 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1964-66) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Swanston Street) Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, 251-257 Collins Street, (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 19741-73 included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Flinders Lane) (Non-contributory).

One individual heritage place recently included in a site-specific Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis is the Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1966) (HO1213):



Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

Other examples

Despite the demolition of many 1960s and 1970s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the advancement of construction techniques from the 1960s through to the mid 1970s and demonstrate the broad range of

design approaches of the period. The podiums of the majority of these places have been modified at street level. Examples include:



Former RACV Club, 111-129 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961) (Interim HO1068)



Former Australia Pacific House, 136-144 Exhibition Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1975-78)



Royal Insurance Group Building, 430-442 Collins Street, (Yuncken Freeman, 1965) (Interim HO1010)



Office Building, 516-520 Collins Street (architect unknown, c1974)



Office Building, 178-188 William Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1972-73)



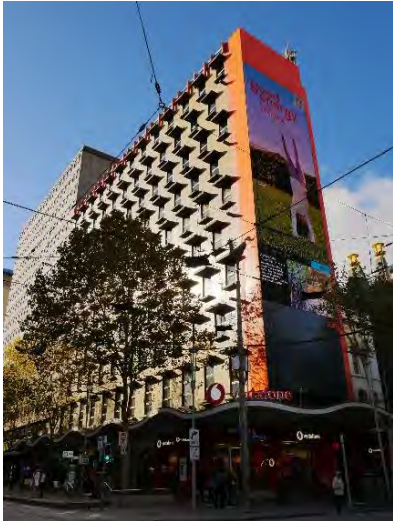
Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building, 155-161 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961-62)



Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



MLA Building, 308-336 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1963)



Royal Mail House, 255-267 Bourke Street (D Graeme Lumsden, 1963)



Former Sleigh Corner Building, 158-164 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1964)



The Former Houston Building, 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kolle & Associates, 1965)



AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street (Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1965-69)



Former Dalgety House, 457-471 Bourke Street
(Peddle Thorp & Walker, 1966-68)



Former State Saving Bank of Victoria, 233-243
Queen Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton
and Lobb, 1967-68)



Former Legal & General House, 375-383 Collins
Street (B Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking, 1967)



Former AMP Building, 344-350 Collins Street
(Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb,
1966-68)



Equitable House, 335-349 Little Collins Street
(unknown architect, 1968)



Former Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478
Collins Street (Meldrum & Partners with Peddle
Thorp Walker, 1968-70)



Former Methodist Church Centre, 130-134 Little Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1966-67)



Cowan House, 457-469 Little Collins Street (E & G Kolle, 1969)



Lonsdale Exchange, 447-553 Lonsdale Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1969)



Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



Former Bryson Centre, 174-192 Exhibition Street (Perrot Lyon Timlock & Kesa, 1970-72)



Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building, 359-373 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, c1972-75)



Nubrick House, 269-275 William Street (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1972)



Former Law Department Building, 221-231 Queen Street (Fischer Group, 1972)



Former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch, 85-91 Queen Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1973)



Former MLC Building, 303-317 Collins Street (Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, c1970-1973)



Office Building, 589-603 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp de Preu, 1973-75)

Analysis

As a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building, the Former Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey office buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne. Similar to the small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings presently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme – and a number of other examples identified above – the Former Guardian Building clearly demonstrates this class of place.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓	<p>CRITERION A Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION B Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).</p>
	<p>CRITERION C Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).</p>
✓	<p>CRITERION D Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).</p>
	<p>CRITERION E Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION F Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)</p>
	<p>CRITERION G Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION H Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an Individual Heritage Place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-4)	No
INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

OTHER

N/A

REFERENCES

- City of Melbourne Libraries online Heritage Collection, reference nos. as cited.
- Contextual History references contained within *City of Melbourne Hoddle Grid Heritage Review: Postwar Thematic Environmental History 1945-1975*
- Building Application Index (BAI) for the City of Melbourne.
- Building Application Plans (BAP), City of Melbourne.
- Butler, Graeme (1983), *Twentieth Century Architecture and Works of Victoria* (also titled *Twentieth Century Architecture Register of Royal Australian Institute of Architects*), Selected Data Sheets Vol 2, prepared for the Royal Australian Institute of Architects.
- Cross-Section*: No. 83, September 1959; No. 114, April 1962.
- Goad, Philip's 'Moderate Modernism, 1945-77' in Goad, Philip & Bates Smart (Firm) (2004), *Bates Smart : 150 years of Australian architecture*, Fishermans Bend [Vic], pp146-213.
- Goad, Philip (2012), 'Bates Smart & McCutcheon' in Philip Goad & Julie Willis's (Eds.) (2012), *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Port Melbourne.
- National Trust of Australia, Victoria (NTAV) (September 2014), *Melbourne's Marvellous Modernism, A Comparative Analysis of Post-War Modern Architecture in Melbourne's CBD 1955 -1975*.
- Sands & McDougall Directories (S&Mc).
- State Library of Victoria (SLV), picture collection, photographers and images as cited.
- The Canberra Times* [A.C.T.]

PREVIOUS STUDIES

**Central Activities District
Conservation Study 1985** C (as 454-458 Collins Street)

**Central City Heritage
Review 1993** C (as 454-458 Collins Street)

**Review of Heritage
Overlay Listings in the
CBD 2002** Ungraded

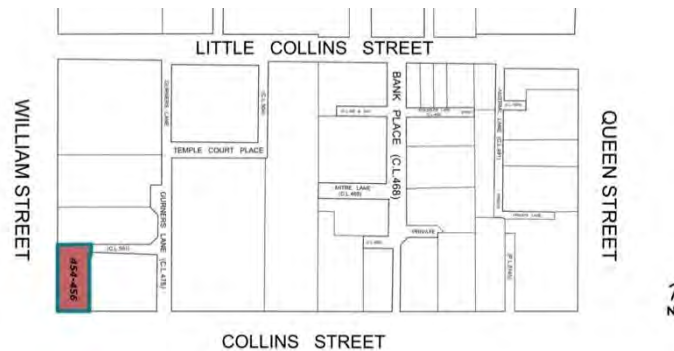
**Central City Heritage
Review 2011** Ungraded

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Former Guardian Building



PS ref no: HO1324XXXX



What is significant?

The Former Guardian Building, 454-456 Collins Street, a multi-storey office building constructed in 1960-61.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing
- The building's high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations made to the street level facades are not significant.

How it is significant?

The Former Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

Constructed in 1960-61 to a design by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, the Former Guardian Building has a clear association with the postwar building boom which transformed central Melbourne into a modern high-rise city. The design of these commercial buildings from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s – many of which were architect designed – was driven by the commercial demands and the prestige afforded by a dominant city presence (Criterion A).

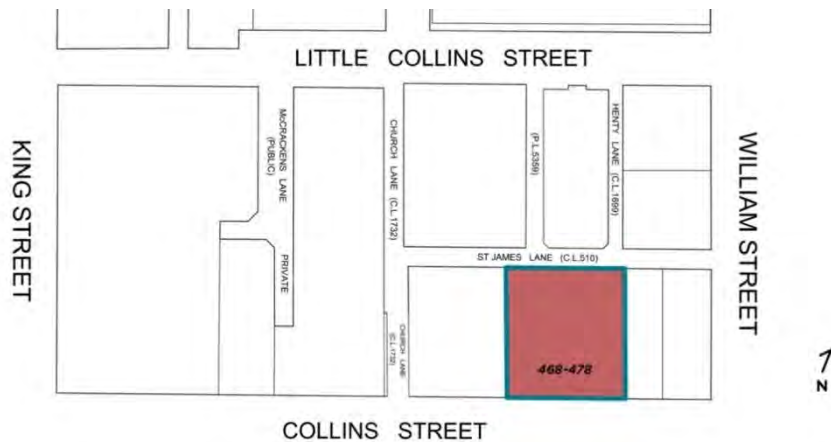
The Former Guardian Building is a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building. The building strongly reflects the style which was popular in the 1960s through to the mid 1970s, particularly in central Melbourne. Constructed as a 10-storey building on a prominent corner site, the Former Guardian Building clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a 1960s to mid 1970s structure, including a solid external appearance with two grid-like curtain walls of regularly spaced

rectangular windows set in plain facades, a contrasting upper level of closely spaced mullions, and the use of materials such as stone-faced precast concrete panels. These demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style (Criterion D).

Primary source

[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\)](#)[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\)](#) (updated March 2022)

SITE NAME	Former Australia-Netherlands House [also known as Christie's Building]
STREET ADDRESS	468-478 Collins Street, Melbourne
PROPERTY ID	102119



SURVEY DATE:	October 2019	SURVEY BY:	GJM Heritage
HERITAGE INVENTORY	No	EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY	No
PLACE TYPE	Individual Heritage Place	PROPOSED CATEGORY	Significant
		FORMER GRADE	Ungraded
DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:	Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners	BUILDER:	E A Watts Pty Ltd
DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:	c1968-1970

THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation focused on the post-war history of the site and did not address associations with Aboriginal people or organisations	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style 1.9 Beyond the curtain wall
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Buiness and finance

LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Office, Carrier, Hairdresser, Café/Restaurant, Merchant, Studio, Caretaker, Workshop
1920s	Office, Carrier, Hairdresser, Café/Restaurant, Merchant, Studio, Caretaker, Retail/Workshop, Club
1960s	Office, Carrier, Hairdresser, Café/Restaurant, Merchant, Studio, Caretaker, Workshop, Club

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Extent of overlay: To extent of property boundary

SUMMARY

The former Australia-Netherlands House was designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker of Sydney in association with Melbourne-based architects Meldrum & Partners, for owners Australia-Netherlands Properties Pty Ltd. Construction of Australia-Netherlands House was completed in 1970, by builders E A Watts Pty Ltd.

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

Beyond the curtain wall

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding, screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

Business and finance in the postwar period

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17). Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

SITE HISTORY

Australia-Netherlands House was designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker of Sydney in association with Melbourne-based architects Meldrum & Partners, for owners Australia-Netherlands Properties Pty Ltd. The names of both firms appear on the drawings dated August 1968 (Figure 1 - Figure 4) (BAF; BAP). The City of Melbourne received a permit application for the project in October 1968, with an estimated project cost of \$3,000,000 (BAI). Construction of Australia-Netherlands House was completed in 1970, by builders E A Watts Pty Ltd (NTAV; BAF). Rankine & Hill were the consulting engineers (BAP).

Australia Netherlands Properties Pty Ltd, Melbourne was associated with the Associated National Insurance Co, Sydney, Australia Netherlands Holding Pty Ltd, Canberra, and Australia Netherlands Investments Pty Ltd, of Sydney. The companies were subsidiaries of the large Dutch insurance group, Nationale-Nederlanden NV, Delft (European Intelligence Ltd, 1968:L; S&Mc). The Associated National Insurance Co. purchased the subject site from the Church of England in 1967 (*Age*, 16 Aug 1968:7).

The 1968 drawing of the south (Collins Street) elevation (Figure 1) was annotated with specifications noting that the building was to be constructed with double-glazed reversible windows, glass spandrels and precast structural mullions with glass tile facing. The building was designed with a narrow

forecourt, entered by stairs (this space was later infilled, extending the interior space of the lower floors) (Figure 3). The stairs comprised precast terrazzo treads and risers (BAF; BAP).

Photos dating to the early 1970s show the original entrance and foyer space (Figure 6 – Figure 8). Australia-Netherlands House was primarily occupied by the offices of the Banque National de Paris (BNP) in the early 1970s (not known to what date), along with Australia Netherlands Properties Pty Ltd, the Associated National Insurance Co., and a number of other companies, mainly in investment, finance and insurance (SLV, Image H2000.195/17; S&Mc).

The building has been referred to as 'Christie's' in recent years (NTAV), presumably referring to later owners/occupants.

Peddle Thorp & Walker, architects

James Peddle (1862-1930) arrived in Australia and practiced as an architect in Sydney from 1889. In 1902, Peddle employed an articulated student (Samuel) George Thorp (1889-1967). Peddle left Thorp in charge of the Australian practice in 1911 and travelled to the United States where he established a practice in California. The partnership of Peddle & Thorp was formed in 1914. From 1920, Frederick H E Walker (1900-1950) served his articles at the firm before completing his studies, working in the United States and travelling. Walker re-joined the firm as partner in 1924, which established the firm Peddle, Thorp & Walker. Frank Thorp (1903-1968; George Thorp's younger brother) became the fourth partner in 1929. George Thorp travelled in 1953 and 1960 to review the latest overseas architectural developments and trends (Goad & Higham 2012:535-6).

From the 1950s, Peddle, Thorp & Walker asserted itself as a major Sydney postwar practice. The firm's design for AMP's Sydney headquarters on Phillip Street (1962) brought them international attention for designing the first skyscraper completed in Sydney (Goad & Higham 2012:535-6; Taylor 2001:58). The curved and glazed curtain wall tower broke the 150 foot (c45.75m) height limit and 'signalled a new era of skyscraper design and a race for height' (Goad & Higham 2012:536). The firm continued designing tall buildings in Sydney, including Sun Alliance House, Bridge Street (1964-65; demolished), Goldfields House, Pitt Street (1966), the Royal Exchange Building, Bridge Street (1967) and the ANZ Bank and Offices, Pitt Street (1972) (Goad & Higham 2012:535-6). In Melbourne, the firm designed Dalgety House on Bourke Street (1966-68) and Australia-Netherlands House on Collins Street (c1968-70), both in association with Melbourne-based architects Meldrum & Partners, as well as the multi-storey office building at 601 Bourke Street (1974).

By the 1980s the firm had grown substantially, with offices established interstate and in New Zealand, and by 2010, a number of offices were located throughout Asia. Since c2008, the firm has been called PTW Architects, with Peddle Thorp Architects continuing to operate in Melbourne, Brisbane and Auckland as separate offices and entities (Goad & Higham 2012:535-6).

Meldrum & Partners, architects

Percy H Meldrum (1887-1968) was born in Casterton, Victoria and studied architecture before being articulated to A A Fritsch from 1907. He remained with Fritsch until 1913 before travelling to the United States and working in England. Meldrum returned to Australia in 1921 and joined A G Stephenson in practice as Stephenson & Meldrum from 1921 to 1937. Meldrum subsequently partnered with Arthur A Noad (1903-1973), forming Meldrum & Noad, before establishing Meldrum & Partners in 1959 (Willis 2012:450).

Meldrum & Noad are known to have designed the Coles and Garrard Building at 376-78 Bourke Street (1957) and the National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch at 85-91 Queen Street (1973).

Meldrum & Partners designed the multi-storey State Savings Bank building at 258-264 Little Bourke Street (1961) with Robert Cousland, and the State Electricity Commission building at 15 William Street (1965) (AIA). Meldrum & Partners acted as the local architects for Sydney-based firm Peddle Thorp & Walker, in the design and construction of Dalgety House on Bourke Street (1966-68) and Australia-Netherlands House on Collins Street (c1968-70).

Meldrum partnered with Sydney-based architect Bill Burrows to form Meldrum Burrows, before Meldrum's son, Richard J Meldrum (1928-2004), joined the firm and Percy Meldrum retired in 1965. Meldrum Burrows gained prominence in the 1970s and '80s with large interstate and international projects (Willis 2012:450).

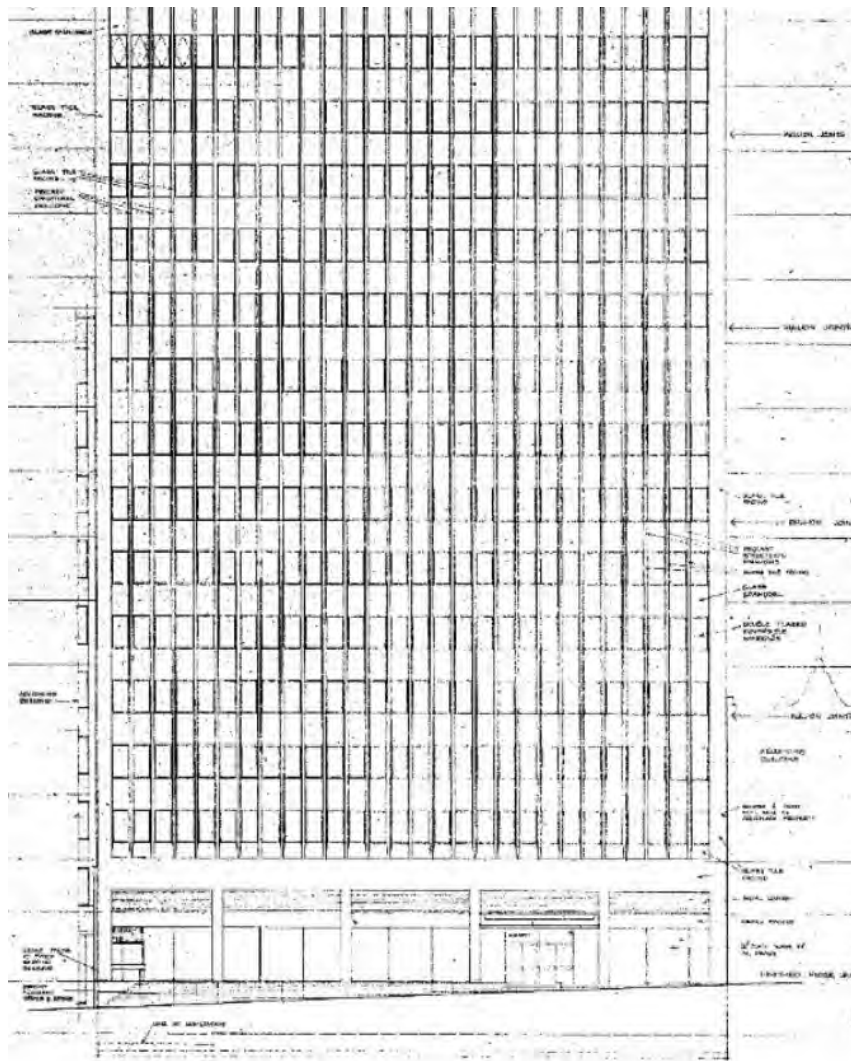


Figure 1. Architectural drawing of the south elevation to Collins Street, dated 1968 (BAP).

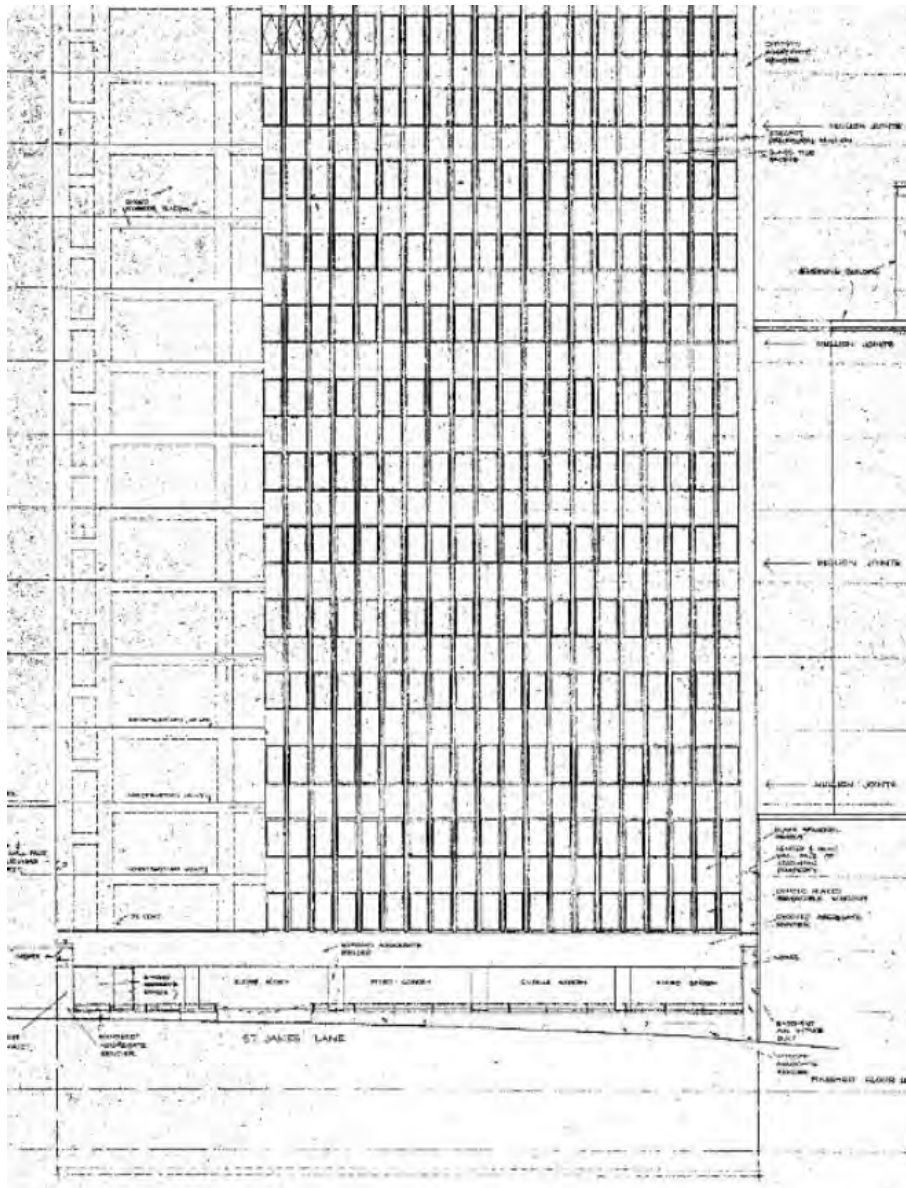


Figure 2. The north elevation; with a higher ground level at St James Lane (BAP).

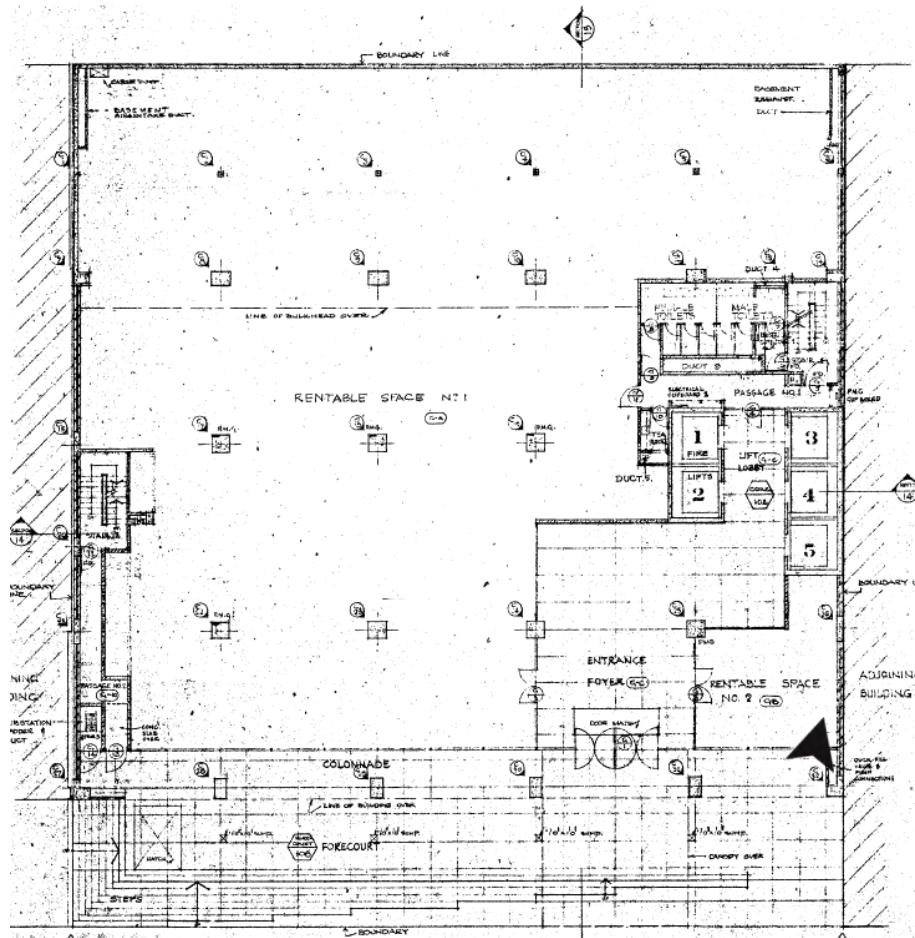


Figure 3. Architectural plan of the ground floor and forecourt, dated 1968. The ground floor is shown to extend to the rear boundary, which is below ground when it reaches St James Lane due to a higher ground level to the north (BAF).

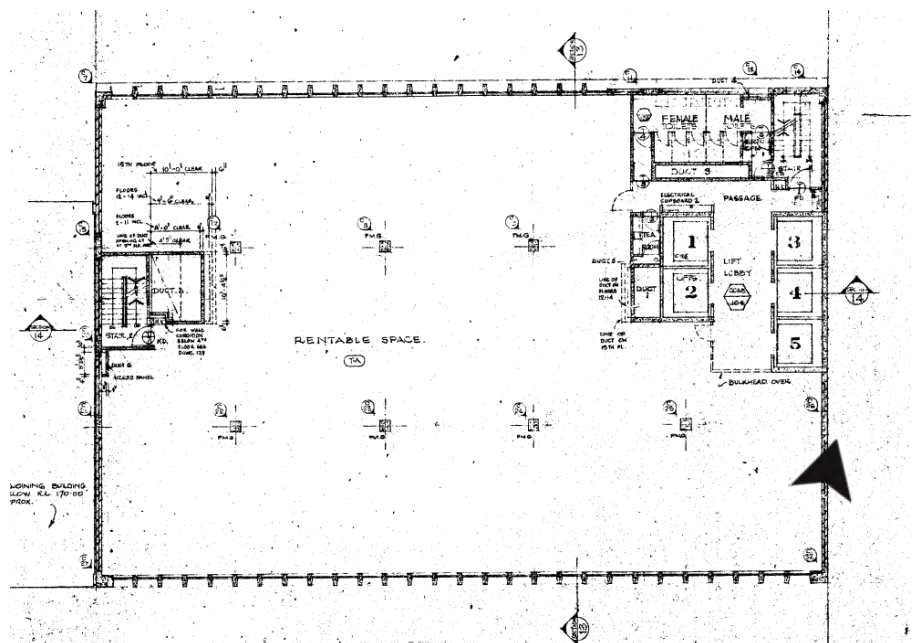


Figure 4. A typical floorplan for the 2nd-14th floors. Drawing dated 1968 (BAP).



Figure 5. Part of an advertisement published in *The Age* in March 1970, advertising new office space to let, available from mid-1970 (*Age*, 11 Mar 1970:19).



Figure 6. The forecourt and entrance; photo dates to 1970s (BAF).



Figure 7. The building in 1973, and manager of the Banque National de Paris (NLA, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, object 161692991).



Figure 8. The foyer of the building in 1973. The caption noted that the photo shows the manager of the Banque National de [Paris] in the bank's offices, Australia-Netherlands House at 470 Collins Street (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H2000.195/17).

SITE DESCRIPTION

The Former Australia-Netherlands House at 468-478 Collins Street is a 17-storey commercial building located on the north side of Collins Street between King and William streets. Constructed in 1968-70 to a design by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

Of rectangular plan with broad frontages to both Collins Street to the south and St James Lane to the north, the building comprises a basement, a car park at first floor level, 15 floors of office space and a plant room at roof level. As the ground level slopes significantly from north to south, the car park is accessed from an open concourse at the rear of the building from St James Lane. Both the front and rear facades of the building are glazed in a similar manner, with side facades largely obscured by adjacent buildings.

The building is of reinforced concrete column and slab construction with solid rendered brick and concrete masonry side walls. The latter is partially visible on the east side, above the adjacent building. The main north and south glazed façades are dominated by closely spaced continuous vertical mullions which are precast structural elements that help support the internal concrete floor slabs. Set behind these precast concrete mullions are rows of aluminium framed windows – some double glazed and vertically pivoted – and brown glass spandrels (described as ‘nut brown glass Armourclad spandrels’ on the original architectural drawings), typical of curtain wall construction of the period. A portion of sheer rendered façade facing St James Lane indicates the location of the service core at the north-east corner of the building.

At ground level in Collins Street, the building has been substantially altered with the removal of the original entry stairs and the insertion of shopfronts which obscure the original pier and beam construction. It appears that this work was undertaken in the 2010s.

INTEGRITY

The Former Australia-Netherlands House, including the original form and detailing of the exterior of the building above street level, remains highly intact to its original construction of 1968-70. Works to the building at Collins Street street level in the 2010s has altered the original design of this frontage.

Overall, the building retains a high degree of architectural integrity to the Post-War Modernist style in fabric, form and detail. While the building has undergone alterations at street level, these do not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the place as a fine example of a Post-War Modernist multi-storey commercial building.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The Former Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of 1960s to mid-1970s multi-storey commercial building design. The building’s two grid-like walls of expressed vertical mullions and rows of aluminium framed glazing and brown glass spandrels can be clearly observed from both Collins Street to the south and St James Lane to the north. Despite the redesign of the street-level facade, the upper facades of the Former Australia-Netherlands House remain highly intact to its original design.

There are a number of buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the former Australia-Netherlands House. These are detailed below.

State-significant places

A small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne have been assessed as being of State-level significance and are included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). These include:

- Total House, 170-90 Russell Street (Bogle & Banfield 1964-65; VHR H2329 & HO1095)
- Former Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-44 Bourke Street (Peter Muller 1966-69)
- Victorian Government Offices, Treasury Reserve Precinct (Yuncken Freeman 1967-68 – outside the Hoddle Grid)
- Eagle House, 473 Bourke Street (Yuncken Freeman 1971-72; VHR H1807 & HO901)
- BHP House, 130-148 William Street (Yuncken Freeman 1969-72; VHR H1699 & HO767).

Locally-significant places

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from this period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme on a permanent basis. Those that are, are generally currently included within Heritage Precincts but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places, as follows:

Precinct Heritage Overlay



Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street, (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1974) included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct (Non-contributory).



Wales Corner, 221-231 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1964-66) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Swanston Street) Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, 251-257 Collins Street, (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 19741-73 included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Flinders Lane) (Non-contributory).

One individual heritage place recently included in a site-specific Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis is the Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1966) (HO1213):



Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

Other examples

Despite the demolition of many 1960s and 1970s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the advancement of construction techniques from the 1960s through to the mid 1970s and demonstrate the broad range of

design approaches of the period. The podiums of the majority of these places have been modified at street level. Examples include:



Former RACV Club, 111-129 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961) (Interim HO1068)



Former Australia Pacific House, 136-144 Exhibition Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1975-78)



Royal Insurance Group Building, 430-442 Collins Street, (Yuncken Freeman, 1965) (Interim HO1010)



Office Building, 516-520 Collins Street (architect unknown, c1974)



Former Guardian Building, 454-456 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1960-61)



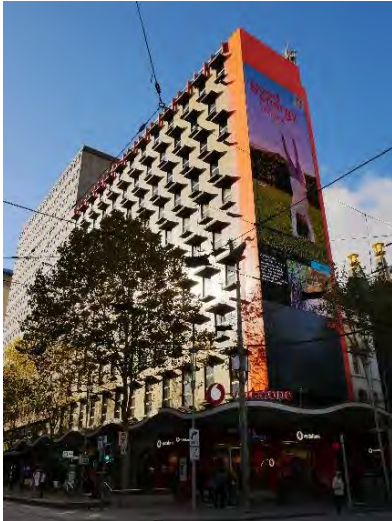
Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building, 155-161 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961-62)



Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



MLA Building, 308-336 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1963)



Royal Mail House, 255-267 Bourke Street (D Graeme Lumsden, 1963)



Former Sleigh Corner Building, 158-164 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1964)



The Former Houston Building, 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kolle & Associates, 1965)



AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street (Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1965-69)



Former Dalgety House, 457-471 Bourke Street
(Peddle Thorp & Walker, 1966-68)



Former State Saving Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street
(Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1967-68)



Former Legal & General House, 375-383 Collins Street
(B Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking, 1967)



Former AMP Building, 344-350 Collins Street
(Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1966-68)



Equitable House, 335-349 Little Collins Street
(unknown architect, 1968)



Office Building, 178-188 William Street
(McIntyre & Partners, 1972-73)



Former Methodist Church Centre, 130-134 Little Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1966-67)



Cowan House, 457-469 Little Collins Street (E & G Kolle, 1969)



Lonsdale Exchange, 447-553 Lonsdale Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1969)



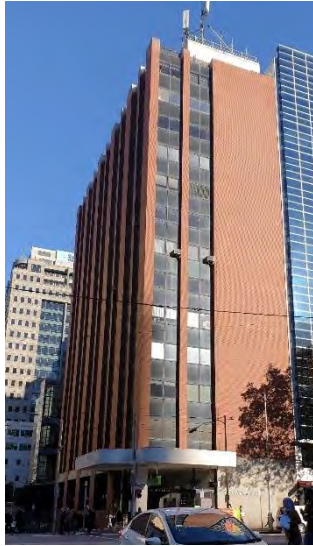
Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



Former Bryson Centre, 174-192 Exhibition Street (Perrot Lyon Timlock & Kesa, 1970-72)



Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building, 359-373 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, c1972-75)



Nubrick House, 269-275 William Street (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1972)



Former Law Department Building, 221-231 Queen Street (Fischer Group, 1972)



Former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch, 85-91 Queen Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1973)



Former MLC Building, 303-317 Collins Street (Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, c1970-1973)



Office Building, 589-603 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp de Preu, 1973-75)

Analysis

As a fine, intact and highly representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building, the Former Australia-Netherlands House at 468-478 Collins Street clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey office buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne. Similar to the small number of 1960s to mid-1970s buildings presently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme – and a number of other examples identified above – the Former Australia-Netherlands House clearly demonstrates this class of place.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓	<p>CRITERION A Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION B Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).</p>
	<p>CRITERION C Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).</p>
✓	<p>CRITERION D Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).</p>
	<p>CRITERION E Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION F Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)</p>
	<p>CRITERION G Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION H Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an Individual Heritage Place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-4)	No
INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

OTHER

N/A

REFERENCES

Contextual History references contained within *City of Melbourne Hoddle Grid Heritage Review: Postwar Thematic Environmental History 1945-1975*

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PREVIOUS STUDIES

**Central Activities District
Conservation Study 1985** Ungraded

**Central City Heritage
Review 1993** Ungraded

**Review of Heritage
Overlay Listings in the
CBD 2002** Ungraded

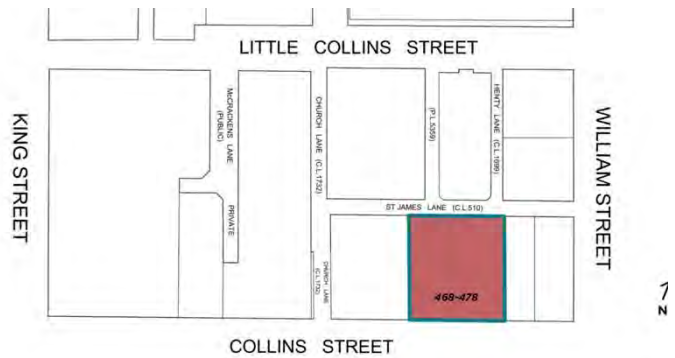
**Central City Heritage
Review 2011** Ungraded

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Former Australia-Netherlands House



PS ref no: [HOXXXXHO1325](#)



What is significant?

The Former Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, a multi-storey office building constructed in 1968-70.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing
- The building's high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations made to the street level foyer are not significant.

How it is significant?

The Former Australia-Netherlands House at 468-478 Collins Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

Constructed in 1968-70 to a design by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners, the Former Australia-Netherlands House has a clear association with the postwar building boom which transformed central Melbourne into a modern high-rise city. The design of these commercial buildings from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s – many of which were architect designed – was driven by the commercial demands and the prestige afforded by a dominant city presence (Criterion A).

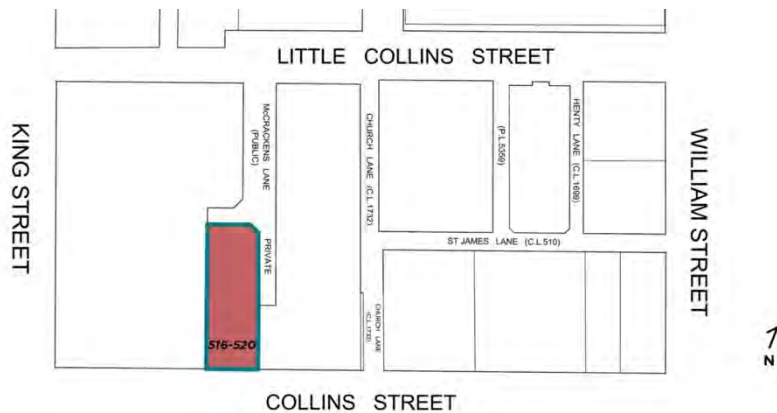
The Former Australia-Netherlands House is a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building. The building strongly reflects the style which was popular in the 1960s to the mid-1970s, particularly in central Melbourne. Constructed as a 17-storey building, the

Former Australia-Netherlands House clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a postwar structure, with a curtain wall facade incorporating structural components. The front façade, displaying a regular grid composed of horizontal bands of glazing with dark spandrels and contrasting vertical mullions, and the use of a variety of materials, including granite and marble cladding and aluminium window frames, demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style (Criterion D).

Primary source

~~[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\)](#)~~[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\) \(updated March 2022\)](#)

SITE NAME	Office Building (Not included in a Heritage Overlay – see Addendum in Volume 1)
STREET ADDRESS	516-520 Collins Street, Melbourne
PROPERTY ID	102116



SURVEY DATE: October 2019

SURVEY BY: GJM Heritage

HERITAGE INVENTORY No

EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY No

PLACE TYPE Individual Heritage Place

PROPOSED CATEGORY Significant

FORMER GRADE Ungraded

DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST: Not known

BUILDER: Not known

DEVELOPMENT PERIOD: Postwar Period (1945-1975)

DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION: c1974

THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation focused on the postwar history of the site and did not address associations with Aboriginal people or organisations	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style 1.9 Beyond the curtain wall
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Buiness and finance

LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Brewery, Merchant
1920s	Office, Car Park
1960s	Bank, Office

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Extent of overlay: To extent of property boundary

SUMMARY

The office building at 516-520 Collins Street was constructed c1974 in the Post-War Modernist style for owners, Hanover Developments Pty Ltd, a land development company.

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

Beyond the curtain wall

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding, screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

Business and finance in the postwar period

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17). Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

SITE HISTORY

The City of Melbourne received a building permit application for a '16 storey office building' in May 1973, with a total estimated cost of \$2,399,000 (BAI). An architectural drawing dated July 1973 shows the south elevation (architect not recorded) (Figure 1).

The multi-storey building was constructed c1974 for owners, Hanover Developments Pty Ltd, a land development company (LV:V9074/V693; S&Mc; *Age*, 13 Jun 1980:15). While the 1974 rate books recorded that 516-520 Collins Street remained 'land', the 1974 Sands & McDougall Directory listed the property as a 'development site'. In July 1978, the *Age* published an advertisement for space to let in the 'new prestige building' at 520 Collins Street (26 Jul 1978:40). The architect and exact built date has not been confirmed.

Binate Pty Ltd purchased the property in January 1979 and the property has had a number of subsequent owners (LV:V9074/V693). In March 1979, owners lodged a building permit application for 'two additional levels' (does not appear to have been carried out; current number of above ground floors matches 1973 drawing at Figure 1) (BAI).

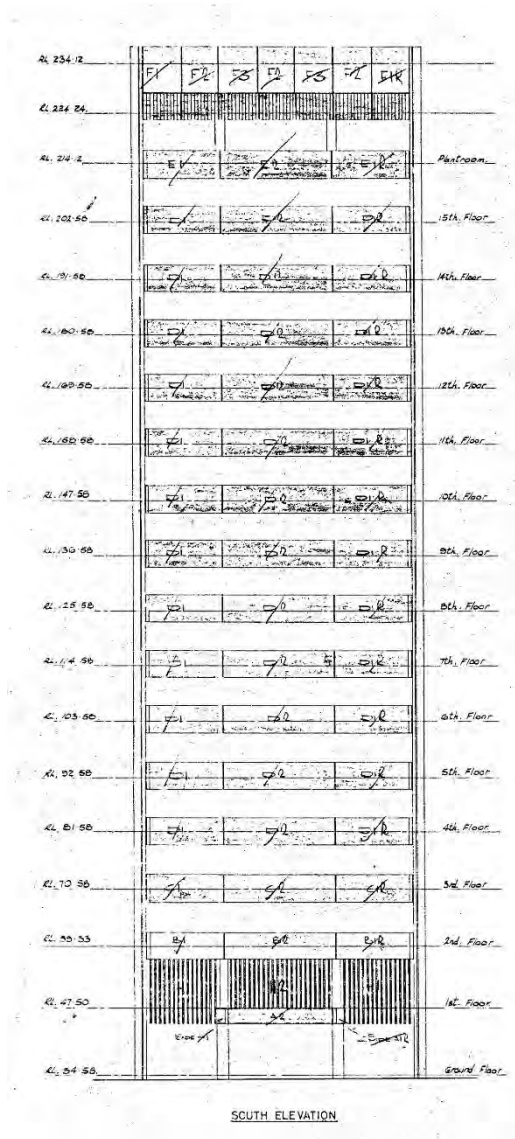


Figure 1. South elevation to Collins Street. Drawing dated July 1973 (no architect recorded) (BAP).

SITE DESCRIPTION

The office building at 516-520 Collins Street is a 16-storey commercial building located on the north side of Collins Street between King Street and William Street. Constructed in c1974, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

The building is of rectangular form with narrow frontage to Collins Street. The narrow rear façade is set well back from Little Collins Street but is clearly visible behind an open allotment which enables access to the rear of the building. The north end of the long east façade is partially visible from the adjoining McCrackens Lane.

The building is of either reinforced concrete or concrete-encased steel construction. Set between brick side walls, the Collins Street façade above street level is a curtain wall with strong horizontal bands of continuous aluminium-framed glazing and alternating solid pre-cast concrete spandrels. The extremities of the pre-cast concrete spandrels of the strongly horizontal façade bend forwards and project beyond the side walls in a highly distinctive manner. The pre-cast concrete parapet above is a

heavy projecting band with vertical incisions at the base which reflect vertical elements that screen a car park which is located at first-floor level.

Divided by a solid splayed corner, the rear façade and the rear portion of the east façade contain alternating bands of glazing and solid spandrels.

At street level the façade has a broad central entrance porch with shopfronts either side. The horizontality of the upper façade is reinforced by the heavy fascia (re-clad) above this entrance bay. Low stone-faced walls enclose a small plaza at the front of the building.

INTEGRITY

The office building at 516-520 Collins Street, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building, remains highly intact from its original construction in c1974. Works to the building at street level have had minimal impact on the overall intactness of the place.

Overall, the building retains a very high degree of architectural integrity to the Post-War Modernist style in fabric, form and detail. While the building has undergone some alterations at street level, these do not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the place as a fine example of a Post-War Modernist multi-storey commercial building.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The office building at 516-520 Collins Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of 1960s to mid-1970s multi-storey commercial building design. The building's strong horizontal emphasis, highly distinctive spandrels and clearly articulated podium, can be clearly observed from Collins Street. Despite some modifications made to the building at street level, the building remains highly intact to its original design.

There are a number of buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the office building at 516-520 Collins Street. These are detailed below.

State-significant places

A small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne have been assessed as being of State-level significance and are included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). These include:

- Total House, 170-90 Russell Street (Bogle & Banfield 1964-65; VHR H2329 & HO1095)
- Former Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-44 Bourke Street (Peter Muller 1966-69)
- Victorian Government Offices, Treasury Reserve Precinct (Yuncken Freeman 1967-68 – outside the Hoddle Grid)
- Eagle House, 473 Bourke Street (Yuncken Freeman 1971-72; VHR H1807 & HO901)
- BHP House, 130-148 William Street (Yuncken Freeman 1969-72; VHR H1699 & HO767).

Locally-significant places

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from this period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme on a permanent basis. Those that are, are generally currently

included within Heritage Precincts but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places, as follows:

Precinct Heritage Overlay



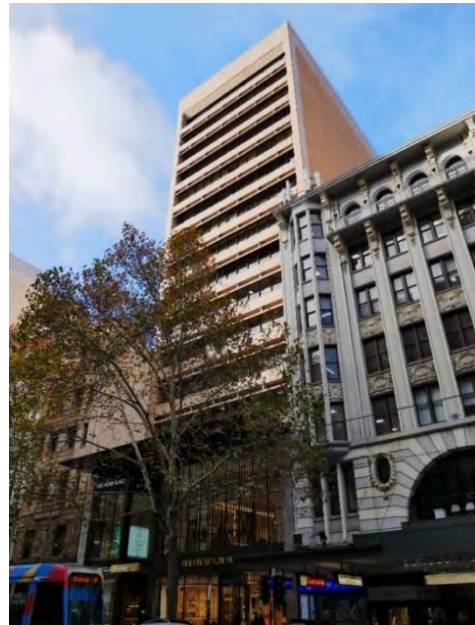
Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street, (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1974) included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct (Non-contributory).



Wales Corner, 221-231 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1964-66) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Swanston Street) Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, 251-257 Collins Street, (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1974-73) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Flinders Lane) (Non-contributory).

One individual heritage place recently included in a site-specific Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis is the Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1966) (HO1213):



Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

Other examples

Despite the demolition of many 1960s and 1970s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the advancement of construction techniques from the 1960s through to the mid 1970s and demonstrate the broad range of design approaches of the period. The podiums of the majority of these places have been modified at street level. Examples include:



Former RACV Club, 111-129 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961) (Interim HO1068)



Former Australia Pacific House, 136-144 Exhibition Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1975-78)



Royal Insurance Group Building, 430-442 Collins Street, (Yuncken Freeman, 1965) (Interim HO1010)



Office Building, 178-188 William Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, c1972-73)



Former Guardian Building, 454-456 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1960-61)



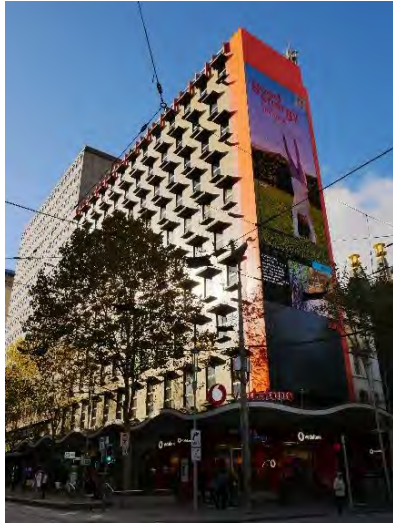
Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building, 155-161 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961-62)



Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



MLA Building, 308-336 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1963)



Royal Mail House, 255-267 Bourke Street (D Graeme Lumsden, 1963)



Former Sleigh Corner Building, 158-164 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1964)



The Former Houston Building, 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kolle & Associates, 1965)



AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street (Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1965-69)



Former Dalgety House, 457-471 Bourke Street (Puddle Thorp & Walker, 1966-68)



Former State Saving Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1967-68)



Former Legal & General House, 375-383 Collins Street (B Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking, 1967)



Former AMP Building, 344-350 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1966-68)



Equitable House, 335-349 Little Collins Street (unknown architect, 1968)



Former Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street (Meldrum & Partners with Peddle Thorp Walker, 1968-70)



Former Methodist Church Centre, 130-134 Little Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1966-67)



Cowan House, 457-469 Little Collins Street (E & G Kolle, 1969)



Lonsdale Exchange, 447-553 Lonsdale Street
(Commonwealth Department of Works, 1969)



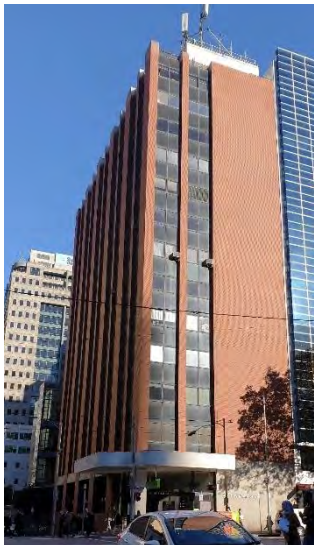
Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



Former Bryson Centre, 174-192 Exhibition Street (Perrot Lyon Timlock & Kesa, 1970-72)



Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building, 359-373 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, c1972-75)



Nubrick House, 269-275 William Street (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1972)



Former Law Department Building, 221-231 Queen Street (Fischer Group, 1972)



Former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch, 85-91 Queen Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1973)



Former MLC Building, 303-317 Collins Street (Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, c1970-1973)



Office Building, 589-603 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp de Preu, 1973-75)

Analysis

As a fine, highly intact and highly representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building, the building at 516-520 Collins Street clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey commercial buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne. Similar to a number of 1960s to mid-1970s buildings listed above, the subject building clearly demonstrates this class of place.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓	<p>CRITERION A Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION B Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).</p>
	<p>CRITERION C Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).</p>
✓	<p>CRITERION D Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).</p>
	<p>CRITERION E Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION F Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)</p>
	<p>CRITERION G Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION H Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an Individual Heritage Place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-4)	No
INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

OTHER

N/A

REFERENCES

Context History references contained within *City of Melbourne Hoddle Grid Heritage Review: Postwar Thematic Environmental History 1945-1975*

Building Application Index (BAI), City of Melbourne.

Building Application Plans (BAP), City of Melbourne. One drawing of the south elevation was accessible (with no architect recorded); the remaining drawings and property file could not be located within City of Melbourne's archives.

City of Melbourne Rate Books (RB), Lonsdale Ward, VPRS 5708, P9, Vol 150 (1974), entry 899. In 1974 the rate books recorded 516-520 Collins Street as 'land'.

Landata Victoria (LV), Certificates of Title, as cited.

Sands & McDougall Directories (S&Mc).

The Age.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

**Central Activities District
Conservation Study 1985** Ungraded

**Central City Heritage
Study Review 1993** Ungraded

**Review of Heritage
Overlay Listings in the
CBD 2002** Ungraded

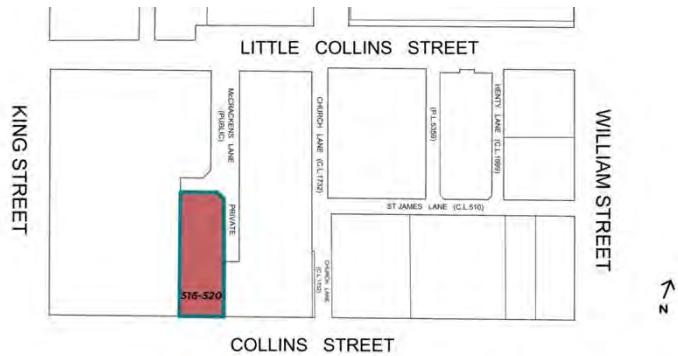
**Central City Heritage
Review 2011** Ungraded

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Office Building



PS ref no: [HOXXXXN/A](#)



What is significant?

The office building at 516-520 Collins Street, a multi-storey commercial building constructed c1974.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing
- The building's high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations made to the lower levels of the building are not significant.

How it is significant?

The office building at 516-520 Collins Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

Constructed in c1974, the office building at 516-520 Collins Street has a clear association with the postwar building boom which transformed central Melbourne into a modern high-rise city. The design of these commercial buildings from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s – many of which were architect designed – was driven by the commercial demands and the prestige afforded by a dominant city presence (Criterion A).

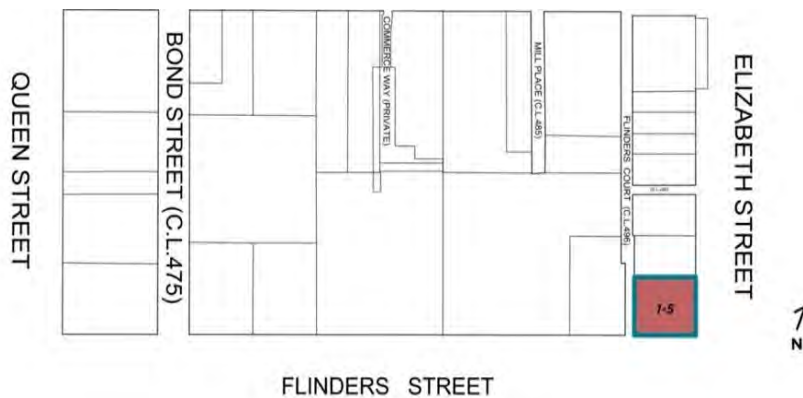
The office building at 516-520 Collins Street is a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building. The building strongly reflects the style which was popular in the 1960s through to the mid 1970s, particularly in central Melbourne. Constructed as a 16-storey structure, the building clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a later postwar commercial building, including

a strong horizontal emphasis and highly distinctive spandrels. These demonstrate important aspects of the Modernist style (Criterion D).

Primary source

[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\)](#)~~Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)~~ [Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\) \(updated March 2022\)](#)

SITE NAME	Former Hosie's Hotel [also known as Hosie's Building (current name)]
STREET ADDRESS	1-5 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne
PROPERTY ID	103165



SURVEY DATE: October 2019		SURVEY BY: GJM Heritage	
HERITAGE INVENTORY	No	EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY	HO505 & HO938 (VHR H2094 'Hosies Hotel Mural' & part VHR H1083 'Flinders Street Railway Station Complex', to extent of cantilevered awning)
PLACE TYPE	Individual Heritage Place	PROPOSED CATEGORY	Significant
DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:	Mussen Mackay & Potter	FORMER CATEGORY	Significant
DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	BUILDER:	E A Watts Pty Ltd
DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:	1954-1956

THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation focused on the postwar history of the site and did not address associations with Aboriginal people or organisations	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style
5 Living in the city centre	5.2 Hotels
8 Enjoying the city	8.2 Melbourne's introduction to the world stage

LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Hotel, Café/Restaurant
1920s	Hotel, Café/Restaurant
1960s	Hotel

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Extent of overlay: To extent of property boundary

SUMMARY

The Former Hosie's Hotel was built in 1954-1956 to a designed by architects and civil engineers Mussen Mackay & Potter for owners, Carlton and United Breweries Ltd. It was constructed by builders E A Watts in time to provide modern accommodation for the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games.

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

Hotels

The lack of hotel accommodation was a cause for concern in central Melbourne in the 1950s and 1960s. In the lead up to the 1956 Olympic Games, it was reported that the city's hotel accommodation was not only far below international standards, but did not provide enough beds to host large numbers of tourists. Up until that time, hotels primarily focused on the provision of food and drink; there was no legal requirement to provide accommodation. To boost the number of hotel beds in the lead up to the 1956 Games, amended liquor laws were introduced that made it essential for every hotel to offer lodgings. This new law contributed to the closure and demolition of an unprecedented number of city hotels in the postwar period. Between 1951 and 1961, 23 hotels in central Melbourne closed, with only five top city hotels from Melbourne's bygone era – Scott's, Menzies', the Oriental, the Windsor and the Federal – remaining. Within a decade, all but one (the Windsor) had been demolished (Annear 2005:193).

Despite a push to provide more hotels with higher standards in time for the Olympic Games, ultimately only a handful were constructed. Hosie's Hotel (1954-56) at the corner of Elizabeth and Flinders streets, was one of the first modern hotels to be built in central Melbourne (NTAV 2014:42).

The 1960s saw the opening of Australia's first high-rise, American-style hotel. With the increasing use of faster jet planes, international travel for both luxury and business purposes became a glamorous pursuit. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, US-based hotels such as the Hilton and the Pan Am-owned Intercontinental began establishing the first international hotel chains.

The Southern Cross Hotel (now demolished) opened in 1962 as Australia's first modern hotel of the jet age – a sign that the city had established itself as an international destination (Annear 2005:186). It occupied a large site on Bourke Street in central Melbourne, formerly occupied by the grand Eastern Market. The hotel, owned by Pan American Airways, set the new standard for city hotels in Melbourne and its central plaza, shopping arcades, and ten-pin bowling alley represented a new concept of public space (Goad). The Southern Cross Hotel remained Melbourne's premier hotel into the early 1980s, famously hosting The Beatles during their 1964 tour and national events such as the Logies and the Brownlow (Brown-May 2005). The Bryson Centre (now Rydges Hotel), 174-192 Exhibition Street (1970-72), was one of a number of high-rise buildings planned for the eastern end of the city in the early 1970s to 'meet the tourist boom expected with the opening of the new airport at Tullamarine' (*Age* 1970:2). The 23-storey Bryson Centre incorporated office space, a 600-seat cinema, restaurants, convention centres and a 292-room hotel, named Hotel Melbourne, which was located on the upper 13 floors of the building. The Bryson Centre was described by the *Age* as a 'city within a city – every need is either within the hotel walls or within walking distance outside' (*Age* 1972:19).

Melbourne's introduction to the world stage

The staging of the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne gave the city a major boost as an international tourist destination and won for Melbourne the reputation as the 'friendly city' (Context 2012:93).

As early as 1948, discussions had commenced regarding the 'immediate development of important public works in the city' to 'merit selection of Melbourne for the 1956 Olympic Games' (*Age* 15 October 1948: 8). Works proposed included the construction of subways and underground railways and a new Spencer Street station, as well as better parking facilities; reconstruction of leading hotels and the erection of new hotels; and modifications to the present licensing laws (*Age* 15 October 1948:8). Melbourne was announced as the host city of the 1956 Olympic Games at a meeting of the International Olympic Committee in Rome in 1949.

As the first Olympic Games to be held in the Southern Hemisphere, there was a public awareness that 'we must not under-estimate the importance of the Games in presenting Australia to the world... Australians, particularly Victorians, should realise that the standard of preparation for the games must be of the highest order' (*Age* 30 June 1950:2). Following the announcement in 1949 that Melbourne would host the games, there was a flurry to update the city's image and, as Barry Humphries has wryly noted, "half of Victorian Melbourne was torn down in the stampede to be modern" (Heritage Alliance 2008:41).

A key concern was the low standard of Melbourne's hotels, with the *Age* reporting that 'it is apparent to all Australian travellers going abroad that our existing hotel accommodation is far below world standard. Staging the Games therefore gives Australia a chance to lift this standard, and to attract more visitors to the Commonwealth.' (*Age* 30 June 1950:2) It was further reported that 'hotels to accommodate visitors to the 1956 Olympic games in Melbourne will be designed on the most modern lines and will be situated mainly within the city limits' (*Age* 23 March 1950:4).

Ultimately, only a handful of hotels were constructed in the city for the Olympic Games. Hosies Hotel (1954-56, Figure 17) at the corner of Elizabeth and Flinders streets, designed by architects Mussen, Mackay and Potter and the Town Hall Hotel (now demolished) were two hotels built in the city centre in anticipation of the Games.

Another widely reported issue at the time was Melbourne's constrained licensing laws. Newspaper editorials raised the issue of Victoria's restrictive liquor licensing laws from as early as 1949, stating that Olympic hospitality was a national matter and the licensing laws 'should be changed so that city hotels can capture the 'community atmosphere' of American hotels' (*Herald*, 25 June 1949:9). A Victorian referendum was held in March 1956 to extend hotel closing hours from 6pm to 10pm, but was defeated, with only six of the 66 state electorates voting in favour of ten o'clock closing. The 'six o'clock swill' ultimately remained in place during the Games. It proved somewhat of a curiosity for international visitors accustomed to more relaxed drinking and café cultures (Reeves 2016).

The 1956 Olympic Games were an important milestone in the city of Melbourne's maturation and growth (Reeves 2016). The international event was a coming of age for Australian sport and proved that Melbourne, and Australia, was capable of hosting a global event never before held outside of Europe or the United States of America (ABC Archives).

SITE HISTORY

Hosie's Hotel was built in 1954-56, designed by architects and civil engineers Mussen Mackay & Potter for owners, Carlton and United Breweries Ltd (BAP; Goad 2012:485; NTAV 2014:42). It was constructed by builders E A Watts (*Cross-Section*, Apr 1954). Hosie's Hotel was one of the first modern high-rise hotels to be built in central Melbourne (NTAV 2014:42; NTAV 1999).

A hotel was first established on the site in a former warehouse in the late 1860s, called the Hobson's Bay Railway Terminus Hotel. Hosie's Hotel (also known as Hosie's Hotel and Café in its earlier incarnation) occupied the building from the 1880s, named after its owner – James S Hosie – who was also known for his Scotch Pie House and Turkish Bathing Palace in Melbourne (S&Mc; *Age*, 31 Aug 1895:2; Spicer). Mr J Richardson purchased the hotel from Hosie and it was on-sold to Carlton and United Breweries Ltd in 1945 (*Age* 18 Jul 1953:4).

In October 1952, Carlton and United Breweries Ltd announced that all of their freehold hotels in Victoria were to be reconstructed and modernised. First was the Town Hall Hotel, Swanston Street,

and second, the 'Famous Hosie's' on the corner of Flinders and Elizabeth streets, which was to be replaced by a multi-storey residential hotel (*Age*, 10 Oct 1952:13; *Argus*, 10 Oct 1952:1). The two hotels were to be completed in time to provide modern accommodation for the 1956 Olympic Games (*Herald*, 4 May 1954:12; VHR: citation).

In July 1953, *The Age* (18 Jul 1953:4) reported on the demolition of the earlier 99-year-old Hosie's Hotel, scheduled for August 1953. Construction of the new hotel was expected to be completed about January 1955. The hotel was to be 11-storeys and accommodate 48 guests, with bedrooms set back from the streets to avoid noise, overlooking a fourth-floor guests' roof garden. The article further reported:

The design of the new building is described by the architects, Mussen Mackay and Porter [sic], of Melbourne, as "contemporary hotel style." It will contain all modern amenities.

Hosie's is the second major city hotel rebuilding project by the Carlton and United Breweries, which bought the hotel from the late Mr. J. Richardson in 1945, since the war. The other project, the Town Hall Hotel, in Swanston Street, has commenced.

In August 1953, Mussen, Mackay and Potter called for tenders for the 'rebuilding' of Hosie's Hotel (*Age*, 29 Aug 1953:47). Two months later in October 1953 the City of Melbourne received a building permit application to erect the new building (estimated total cost of £350,000) (BAI). By May 1954, construction was in its initial stages, with excavators preparing the site for foundations (*Herald*, 4 May 1954:12; BLE, 24 Apr 1954:35).

The principal architect on the project was reportedly Keith Mackay, who had been involved with the design of Australia Hotel in the 1930s, with Leslie M Perrott (NTAV 1999). The design of Hosie's Hotel was different to other high-rise projects within the city, featuring interlocking volumes, solid and glass curtain walls and a colourful multi-storey mural on the east elevation (ultimately executed by Richard Beck) (NTAV 1999). A 1954 newspaper article noted the building was 'of contemporary American design' (*Herald*, 4 May 1954:12). Some sources suggest that the design reflected the earlier styles of the European Mondrian or Dutch avant-garde art movement 'De Stijl' ('The Style'), with its smooth finishes and integration of art and architecture, with Beck's mural a major feature of the building (Butler 1985: citation; VHR: citation).

Architectural drawings dated August 1953 indicate that the finish to the west and north elevations was cement render with a ruled grid (Figure 1; south and east elevation drawings not located). The ground floor was designed with entrance lobbies off Flinders Street and Elizabeth Street (Figure 2). The architectural plans show public bars at the basement and ground levels, a public lounge to the first floor, public dining room to the second floor, private dining room to the third floor, hotel reception lobby, cocktail bar, guest lounge and terrace to the fourth, staff amenities to the fifth, manager's flat on the sixth, and accommodation from the seventh to tenth floors (BAP).

The hotel development was discussed in contemporary newspapers and architectural publications and later commentary suggests that Hosie's Hotel was considered as important for its time as the Hotel Australia development (*Age*, 27 Nov 1997:24). The Australia Hotel was completed in 1939 (demolished in 1989) at 262-270 Collins Street, replacing an earlier hotel of the same name. The 12-storey hotel's influential modernist architecture was the work of Leslie M Perrott in association with Colin McKenzie and Keith Mackay. The hotel developed a reputation as one of the finest in Australia,

its bars, cinemas, kitchens and shopping arcades serving as a hub for contemporary Melbourne's social scene. Australia Hotel was an important cultural venue and a symbol of Melbourne's modernity (Spicer; NTAV citation).

The Melbourne University publication *Cross-Section* commented on Hosie's Hotel in April 1954, during the early construction stages. The article discussed the design, with four floors of fully air-conditioned public rooms (bars, lounges and dining rooms) and guest garden. The structure was to comprise a reinforced concrete frame, aluminium windows and spandrels, ceramic veneer and travertine finishes (Figure 3) (*Cross-Section*, Apr 1954).

The *Age* further noted that the hotel was to comprise large areas of glass framed in satin finished aluminium spandrils. The concrete walls were to be faced with ceramic tiles. The article described the internal spaces and noted that the six upper floors were to provide 'high class residential accommodation' (*Age*, 12 Nov 1954:3).

In July 1955, *Cross-Section* reported that Hosie's Hotel was still under construction and 'promises still to be a city [building] of more individual character than its contemporaries' (*Cross-Section*, Jul 1955). Also at this stage, in July 1955, a permit application was lodged with the City of Melbourne to construct a cantilever verandah (BAI). Photographs show the stages of construction (Figure 4 - Figure 7).

The completed hotel features a three-storey modernist mosaic mural on the Elizabeth Street elevation, created by artist Richard Beck (1912-1985) in 1955. Beck was an English and German trained graphic designer and one of the leading modernist graphic designers in Melbourne at the time. The abstract image is made of ceramic panels and represents three glasses (or pots) clinking together. The mural expressed the modernist movement in architecture and design in Melbourne. This modernism was important as the city of Melbourne attempted to present itself to the world as a modern, contemporary city at the time of the 1956 Olympic Games (Goat 2012:485; VHR: citation). The mural was included in the Victorian Heritage Register in 2006.

In November 1956, an American attending the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games reported back to an American newspaper (*News-Journal*, 23 Nov 1956:19) on the institution of the 'Six O'Clock Swill', and a visit to the 'pub in Hosies Hotel' which he noted had lately been rebuilt and described as 'rather shiny with blond panelling'.

The building was refurbished in the late 1980s (BAI) and continued to serve as Hosie's Hotel until at least the mid-1990s (*Age*, 25 Sep 1996:41). In 2019 the building is called Hosie's Building (CoMMaps).

Mussen Mackay & Potter, architects

Mussen, Mackay and Potter was established in c1950 by architect, Keith Mackay, and civil engineers, Norman Henry Mussen and Charles Potter. The firm undertook a range of commercial, educational and industrial work in the 1950s. Mussen was also a lecturer at the University of Melbourne in the 1940s and 1950s – his teaching on structural engineering influenced architects like Peter McIntyre and Kevin Borland.

The firm's commercial work in Melbourne included a store for Sportsgirl in Collins Street (1955) and Hosie's Hotel in Flinders Street (1954-56), which was constructed in readiness for the 1956 Olympic Games. The firm became Mackay and Potter in c1958, after which it designed offices for the Gas &

Fuel Corporation in St Kilda Road, Albert Park and the State Accident and Motor Car Insurance on Collins Street, Melbourne (1965).

Richard Beck, artist

Richard Beck (1912-1985), was known nationally for his graphic design work in the mid-twentieth century. Before coming to Australia in 1940, Beck had his own design consultancy in London working on London Transport Posters, for Shell Mex Ltd and for the Orient Line. In Australia, Beck worked as a commercial designer. He designed the only poster commissioned to officially promote and commemorate the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne. His most recognised work was his label for Coonawarra wines featuring a woodcut of the winery, which is still in use. He also designed stamps and was on the panel for the design of the Australian decimal currency. Richard Beck was a member of the design committee for the Olympic Street decorations and was represented in the Design Section of the Olympic Arts festival. His work is held by the National Gallery of Victoria, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the London Transport Museum and the London Design Museum (VHR: citation).

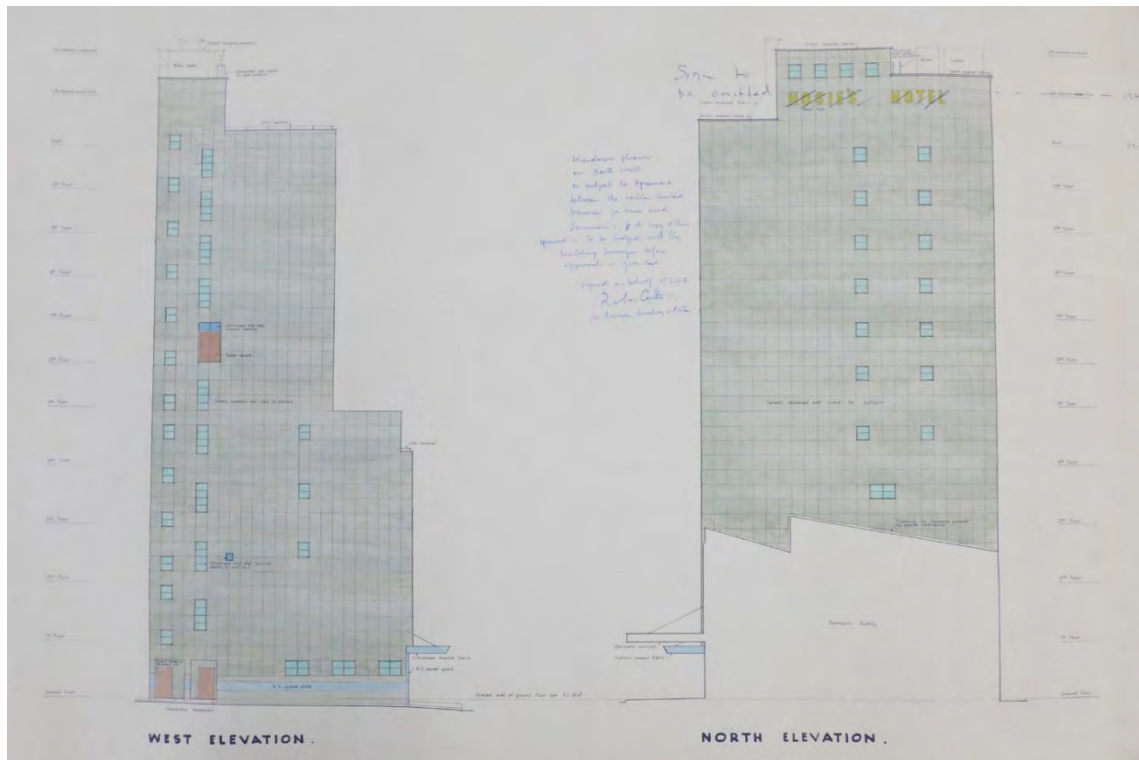


Figure 1. West and north elevations. Annotation notes that the 'Hosies Hotel' metal sign to the north elevation was to be omitted. Drawings by Mussen Mackay & Potter, dated August 1953 (BAP; south and east elevation drawings not located) (BAP).

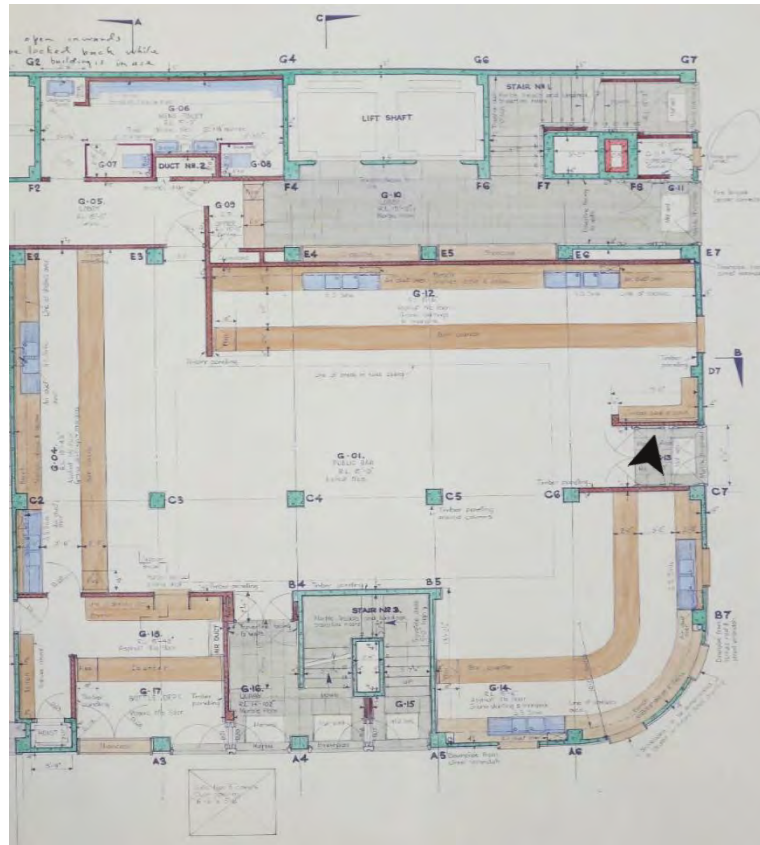


Figure 2. Plan of the ground floor, with a public bar and lobby entrances off both main streets (in grey). Drawing by Mussen Mackay & Potter, dated August 1953 (BAP).



Figure 3. Illustration of the proposed hotel, which was under construction when the image was published in April 1954 (*Cross-Section* No. 18, Apr 1954).



Figure 4. The hotel under construction in February 1955 (SLV, Lyle Fowler, photographer, Image H92.20/5269).



Figure 5. Construction phase, in 1955 (SLV, Mark Strizic, photographer, Image H2008.11/1086).



Figure 6. The construction phase, July 1955 (*Cross-Section*, Jul 1955).



Figure 7. The construction phase. Photo probably dates to 1955-56 (SLV, Peter Wille, photographer, Image H91.244/3970).



Figure 8. Hosie's Hotel. Photo probably dates to c1955, before the mural was installed (SLV, Rose Stereograph Co, Image H32492/8571).



Figure 9. Hosie's Hotel. Photo is dated c1957-63 (NAA, J2669, 463).



Figure 10. Hosie's Hotel. Photo is dated c1957-63 (NAA, J2669, 464).

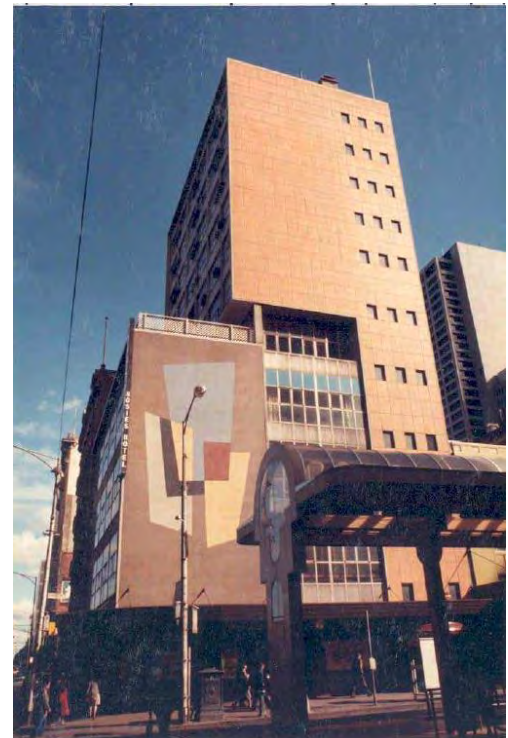


Figure 11. The hotel in 1985 (Butler 1985: Building ID Form).



Figure 12. The hotel in 1985 (Butler 1985: Building ID Form).

SITE DESCRIPTION

The Former Hosie's Hotel at 1-5 Elizabeth Street is a 10-storey commercial hotel building with basement, located on the north-east corner of Elizabeth and Flinders streets. Situated on this prominent site opposite Flinders Street Station, the building has main frontages to both these streets. Constructed in 1954-56 to a design by Mussen Mackay & Potter, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

Set on a square site, Flinders Court forms the western boundary and an adjacent low-rise building forms the northern boundary. The building presents as a complex composition of two overlapping and interlocking rectangular forms – a low-rise block of four floors to the south and a high-rise tower to the north.

The building is of reinforced concrete column and slab construction with the two main facades of each building block presenting as curtain wall to the south and contrasting solid masonry walls to the east. Facing south, the upper and lower sections of the Flinders Street façade are glazed curtain walls with large sets of windows arranged in a heavy grid of aluminium window frames, sashes and spandrel facings. In contrast the east façade is formed from a complex of solid masses with a glazed central section dividing the two main building volumes when viewed from Elizabeth Street.

These main facades display contrasting finishes and colours. This includes a large distinctive and colourful mosaic mural, depicting an abstraction of three overlapping glasses, which covers the otherwise blank three-storey façade of the low-rise southern section. Rows of small fixed inset windows provide the only relief to the sheer ceramic tile-clad facade of the high-rise tower.

Other than a vertical row of small window openings facing Flinders Court, the west and north facades present as plain cement rendered walls, ruled with a rectangular pattern.

Rows of shopfronts with cantilever verandahs occupy the building at street level in both Flinders and Elizabeth Streets.

INTEGRITY

The Former Hosie's Hotel, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building above street level, remains highly intact to its original construction in 1954-56. Modifications to the building at street level, and the re-glazing of large windows to the main facades, have altered the original design. The overall grid of window openings has been retained, however larger panes of glass have replaced the previously multi-paned windows.

Overall, the building retains a high degree of architectural integrity to the Post-War Modernist style in fabric, form and detail. While the building has undergone alterations at street level, and the window glazing has been replaced, these changes do not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the place as a fine example of a Post-War Modernist multi-storey hotel building.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The Former Hosie's Hotel at 1-5 Elizabeth Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of the emerging multi-storey commercial building design of the mid-1950s. The building's grid-like, south-facing curtain walls and contrasting complex of tile-clad solid masses of the east façade (incorporating the distinctive and colourful mural) can be clearly observed from Flinders Street and Elizabeth Street. Despite the redesign of the façade at street level, the upper facades of the Former Hosie's Hotel remain highly intact to its original design.

Hotels in Melbourne

Available evidence suggests that only two new hotels were constructed in the 1950s in the Melbourne CBD in preparation for the 1956 Olympic Games— Hosie's Hotel and the Graham Hotel, which replaced the Town Hall Hotel. Both were designed in a Post-War Modernist style for owner Carlton and United Breweries Ltd.

Designed by Best Overend and built in 1954-55, the Graham Hotel was a small hotel constructed in Swanston Street. It replaced the Town Hall Hotel which had been damaged in an explosion in 1950. As recorded in the *Herald* (17 September 1954, p13), the Graham Hotel was built with an unusual front façade of stainless steel and glazed terracotta, as indicated by early images of the building.

The Graham Hotel remains in Swanston Street and the original wrought iron sign, high on the north façade, remains clearly visible above the low-scale southern section of the adjacent Wales Corner building at the corner of Swanston and Collins streets. However, the main façade of the Graham Hotel has been substantially altered with a cement render applied to the entire surface and no remnants of the distinctive original finishes are visible.



Figure 13. The Graham Hotel, *Herald* (17 Sep 1954:13)



Figure 14. The Graham Hotel, 1955 (SLV, Mark Strizic, photographer)



Figure 15. The Graham Hotel (GJM Heritage, February 2020)

The Former Hosie's Hotel retains a high degree of architectural integrity to the Post-War Modernist style in fabric, form and detail. In comparison, changes made to the Graham Hotel – in particular changes to the fabric – have reduced the place's architectural integrity.

Other Post-War Modernist buildings in the Hoddle Grid

There are a number of buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the Former Hosie's Hotel. These are detailed below.

State-significant places

A comparative example in the City of Melbourne which is located immediately adjacent to the Hoddle Grid is ICI House, 1-4 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1958). This place is included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR H0786).

Locally-significant places

Precinct Heritage Overlay

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from the early postwar period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme. Those from the 1950s that are included in the Heritage Overlay are currently included as part of Heritage Precincts, but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places. These places are:



Former Gilbert Court, 100-104 Collins Street (John A La Gerche, 1954-55) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Allans Building, 276-278 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton & Lobb, 1956-57) included in HO502 The Block Precinct as a Significant place.



Coates Building, 18-22 Collins Street (John A La Gerche, 1958-59) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Bank of Adelaide Building, 265-269 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton & Lobb, 1959-60) included in HO502 The Block Precinct as a Contributory place.

Other Examples

Despite the demolition of many 1950s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the initial period of curtain wall construction in Melbourne and demonstrate similar characteristics to the subject building. The following examples are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places as part of the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review:



Lauren's House, 414-416 Lonsdale Street (Harold Bloom, 1956) (Interim HO1254).



Former Atlas Assurance Building, 404-406 Collins Street (H Garnet Alsop & Partners, 1958-61) (Interim HO1008).



Former London Assurance House, 468-470 Bourke Street (B Evans & Partners, 1960) (Interim HO1006).



Former Batman Automatic Telephone Exchange, 376 Flinders Lane (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1957).



Former Ajax House, 103-105 Queen Street (HD Berry, 1956).



HC Sleigh Building, 166-172 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1953-55).



Coles & Garrard Building, 376-378 Bourke Street (Meldrum & Noad, 1957).



Canton Insurance Building, 43-51 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1957).



Former AMP Building, 402-408 Lonsdale Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1956-58).

Analysis

As a fine and highly intact representative example of its type, the Former Hosie's Hotel at 1-5 Elizabeth Street clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne. Similar to the small number of 1950s buildings presently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme – and a small number of other examples identified throughout the Hoddle Grid and listed above – the Former Hosie's Hotel clearly demonstrates this class of place.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓	<p>CRITERION A Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION B Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).</p>
	<p>CRITERION C Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).</p>
✓	<p>CRITERION D Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).</p>
	<p>CRITERION E Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION F Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)</p>
	<p>CRITERION G Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION H Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an Individual Heritage Place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-4)	No
INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

OTHER

N/A

REFERENCES

Contextual History references contained within *City of Melbourne Hoddle Grid Heritage Review: Postwar Thematic Environmental History 1945-1975*

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PREVIOUS STUDIES

**Central Activities District
Conservation Study 1985** B

**Central City Heritage
Study Review 1993** B

**Review of Heritage
Overlay listings in the
CBD 2002** Ungraded

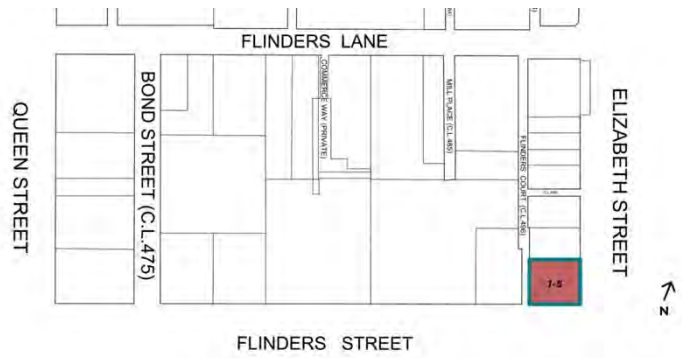
**Central City Heritage
Review 2011** Ungraded

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Former Hosie's Hotel



PS ref no: HO1327XXXX





What is significant?

The Former Hosie's Hotel, 1-5 Elizabeth Street, a multi-storey hotel building constructed in 1954-56.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing
- The building's high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations made to the street level facade are not significant.

How it is significant?

The Former Hosie's Hotel at 1-5 Elizabeth Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

Constructed in 1954-56 to a design by Mussen Mackay & Potter, the Former Hosie's Hotel has a clear association with the postwar building boom which transformed central Melbourne into a modern high-

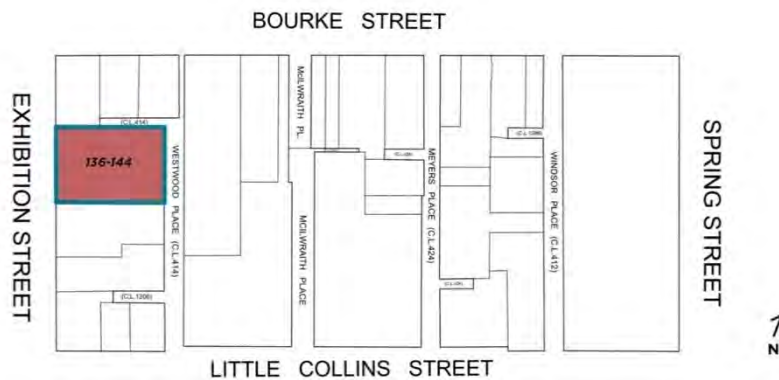
rise city. Built in preparation for the Olympic Games in Melbourne in 1956, the Former Hosie's Hotel appears to be one of only two new hotels constructed in central Melbourne in the 1950s (Criterion A).

The Former Hosie's Hotel is a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial hotel building. The building strongly reflects the style which was emerging in the mid-1950s and was popular in the late 1950s, particularly in central Melbourne. Constructed to the prevailing 40m (132 foot) height limit of the time, the Former Hosie's Hotel clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a 1950s structure with a grid-like south-facing curtain wall façade and contrasting east-facing solid masses, as well as the use of materials such as aluminium window frames, sashes and spandrel facings and ceramic tile cladding. These demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style (Criterion D).

Primary source

[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\)](#)~~Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)~~ (updated March 2022)

SITE NAME	Former Australia Pacific House [also known as CAGA Building]
STREET ADDRESS	136-144 Exhibition Street, Melbourne
PROPERTY ID	103623



SURVEY DATE:	October 2019	SURVEY BY:	GJM Heritage
HERITAGE INVENTORY	No	EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY	No
PLACE TYPE	Individual Heritage Place	PROPOSED CATEGORY	Significant
		FORMER GRADE	Ungraded
DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:	McIntyre McIntyre & Partners	BUILDER:	Sapris Constructions Pty Ltd
DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:	1975-1978

THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation focused on the postwar history of the site and did not address associations with Aboriginal people or organisations	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style 1.9 Beyond the curtain wall
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Buiness and finance

LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Merchant, Trade, Retail
1920s	Merchant, Retail
1960s	Merchant, Retail

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Extent of overlay: To extent of property boundary

SUMMARY

Australia Pacific House is a 13 storey reinforced concrete building designed by architects McIntyre McIntyre & Partners for owners Australia Pacific Investment Corporation Pty Ltd. Construction of the building was undertaken from 1975-1978.

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

Beyond the curtain wall

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding, screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

Business and finance in the postwar period

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17). Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

SITE HISTORY

Australia Pacific House was designed by architects McIntyre McIntyre & Partners for owners Australia Pacific Investment Corporation Pty Ltd (also known as Aust-Pacific Investment Corporation Pty Ltd), with construction from 1975-1978. The City of Melbourne received a building permit application for construction of a 13 storey reinforced concrete office building at 136-144 Exhibition Street in August 1974 (with an estimated cost of \$3,132,000) (BAI; BAF; McIntyre). The building was designed for owners Australia Pacific Investment Corporation Pty Ltd, to serve as Australia Pacific House. In 1975, the beneficial owners Commercial & General Acceptance Ltd (CAGA) appointed Sapis Constructions Pty Ltd as the builders (Aust-Pacific Investment Corp still held the property in trust) (BAF). The structural consultants were Parkhill and Freeman (BAP).

Commercial & General Acceptance Ltd (CAGA) was a national finance company established in the 1950s, sponsored by the CBC Bank Group (Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Limited). Associated companies included Commercial & General Insurance Ltd, CAGA Personal Credit Pty Ltd, and CAGA Acceptance Pty Ltd, amongst others (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 Nov 1960:31; CBC Officers Club). Contemporary newspapers addressed Commercial & General Acceptance Ltd to 136 Exhibition Street from 1979 to 1981 (may extend beyond 1981; not confirmed) (*Age*, 24 Feb 1979:83; 21 Feb 1979:49).

Specifications dating to 1974 described the 'eleven storey office building', to be constructed of reinforced concrete, an indoor restaurant and outdoor garden court at basement level, a foyer and rentable space at ground level, rentable office spaces on the 1st to 10th floors and a plant room and roof area on the 11th floor (BAF). Architectural drawings dated 1974 and 1975 show the elevations and proposed basement and ground floor plans, with an east and west plaza at ground level and basement level garden court and restaurant (Figure 1 - Figure 6). Two photos show the building in 1984 (Figure 8 & Figure 9).

McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, architects

McIntyre McIntyre & Partners was established in 1962 as McIntyre, McIntyre & Associates following the merger of Peter and Dione McIntyre's architectural practice with that of Peter's father, Robert A McIntyre. From 1967 to 1972, the firm practiced as McIntyre, McIntyre & Partners, before changing to its current iteration, McIntyre Partnership. The amalgamation was a commercial move to gain larger commissions.

Prior to this, Peter and Dione's work involved small-scale domestic projects. Peter's work in particular focused on the interplay of function and structure, where he experimented with cantilevered and tensile structures, and the Ctesiphon arch. He gained public recognition with the commission for the Melbourne Olympic Swimming Stadium (1952-6) in collaboration with architects, Kevin Borland and John & Phyllis Murphy, and engineer Bill Irwin.

Following the McIntyre merger, the new firm designed a significant number of hotels and hospitality ventures (inherited from McIntyre Snr's practice), as well as skiing and alpine architecture. In central Melbourne, the firm completed the innovative Kings Parkade car park in Little Collins Street (1966), and commercial office buildings including 170 William Street (1968), 150 Lonsdale Street (1969), 178-188 William Street (1972-73) and Australia Pacific House at 136-144 Exhibition Street (1975-78). Other notable work included the adaptive reuse and conversion of the early twentieth century Henry Jones Jam Factory in Prahran into an up-market shopping centre (1974) and the design for Melbourne's Parliament Station (1973-82).



Figure 1. Architectural drawing of the west elevation (fronting Exhibition Street), dated 1965 (BAP).

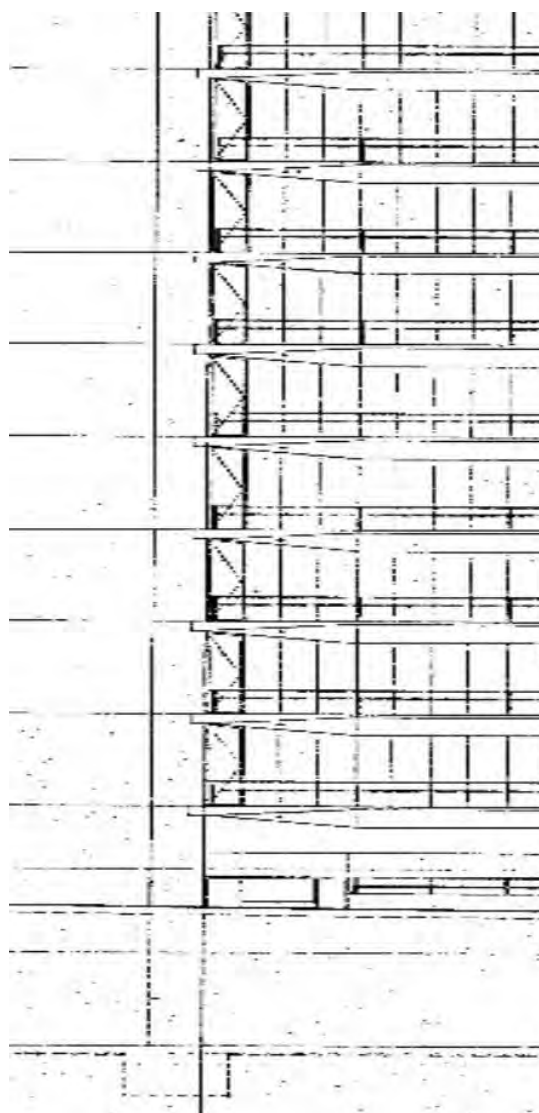


Figure 2. East (rear) elevation, dated 1975 (BAP).

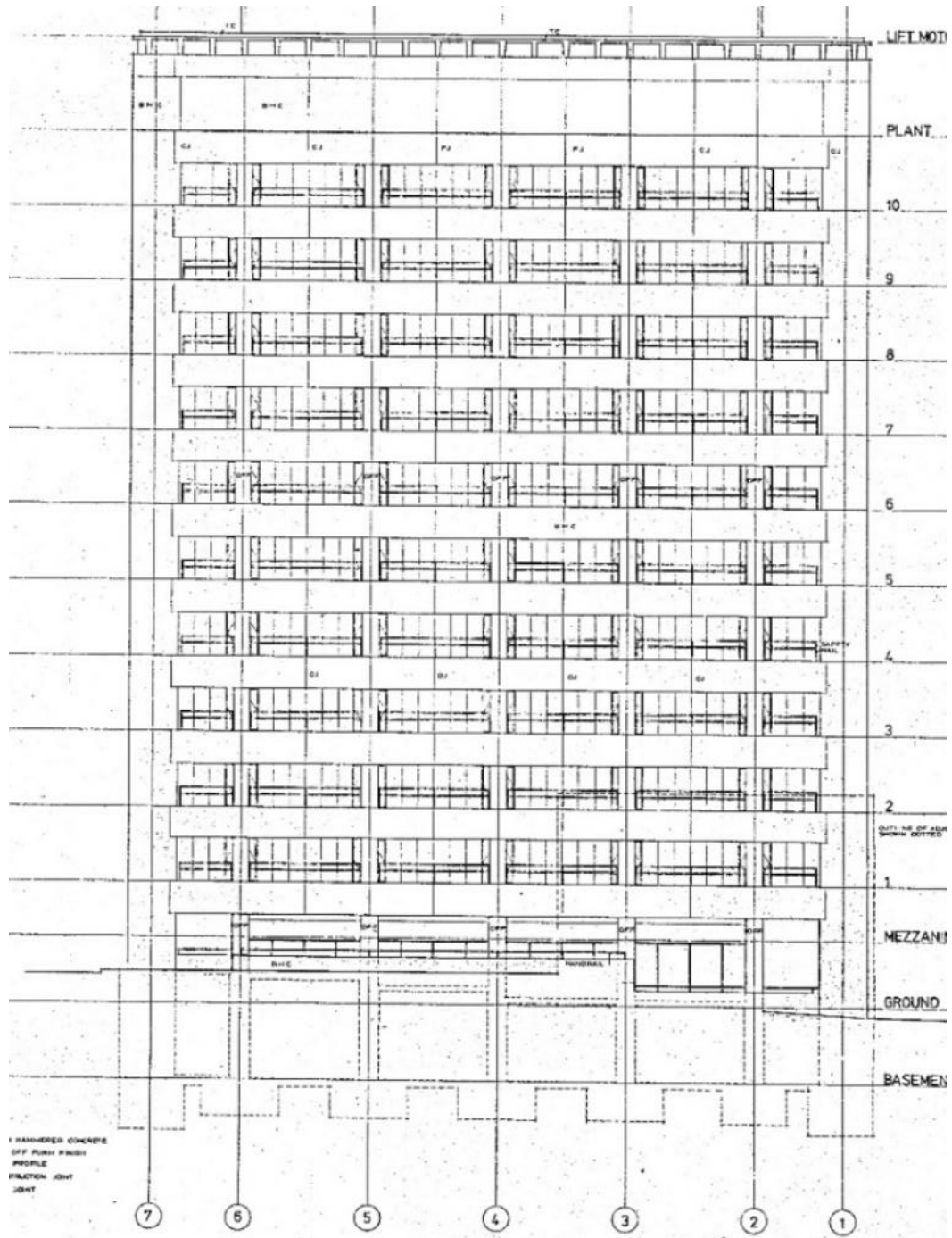


Figure 3. Architectural drawing of the north elevation, dated 1975 (BAP).

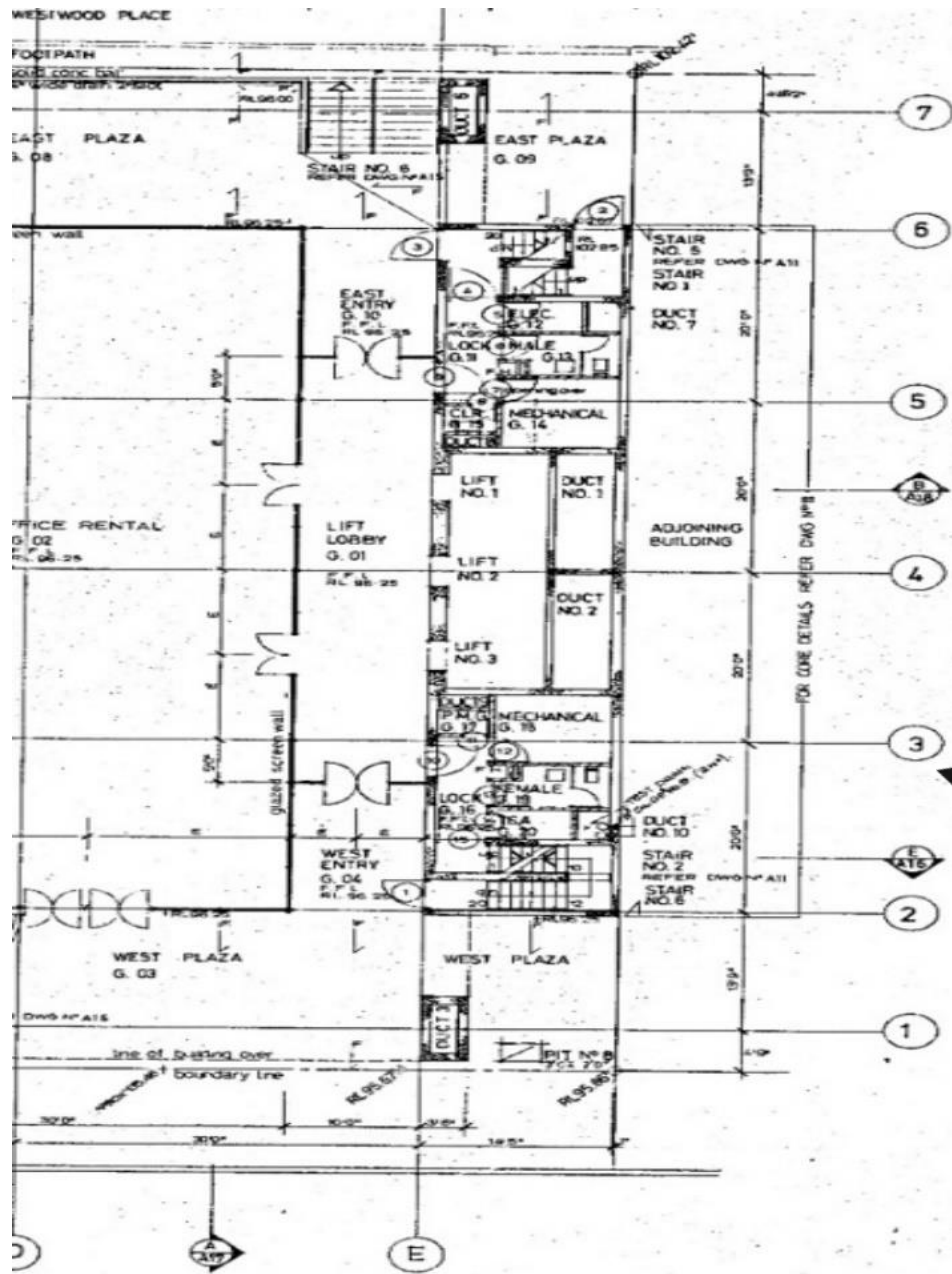


Figure 4. Detailed ground floor plan, dated 1975 (BAP).

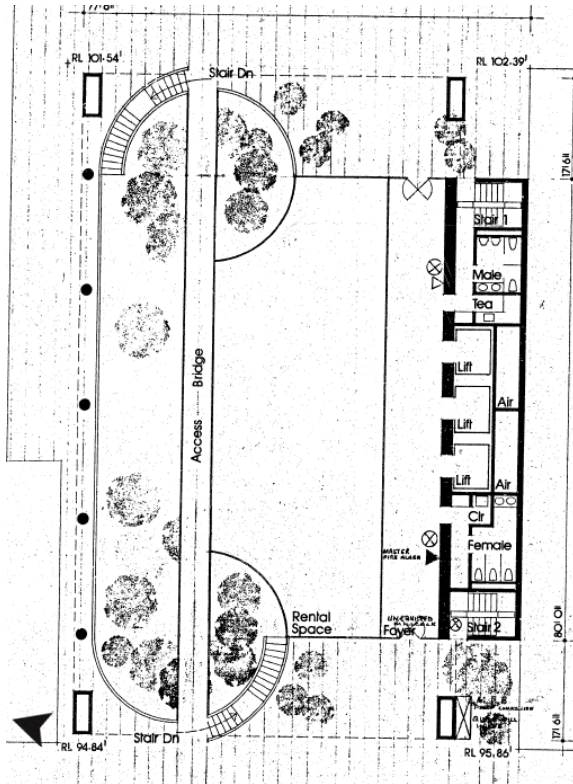


Figure 5. Ground floor plan, stamp dated 1974 (BAP).

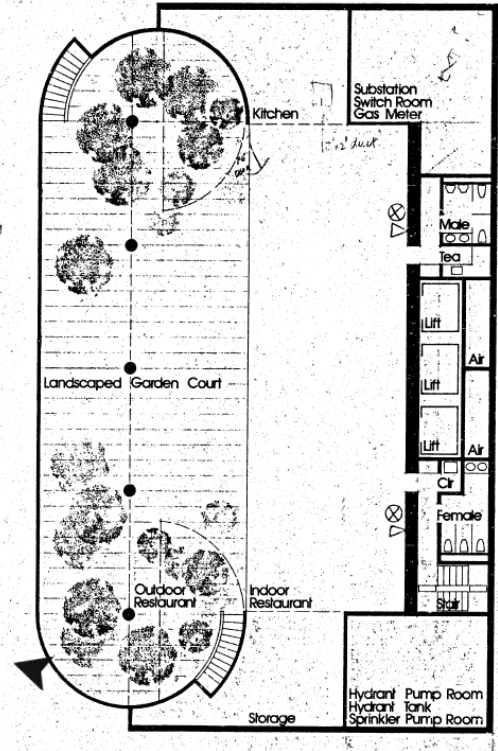


Figure 6. Basement floor plan, stamp dated 1974 (BAP).

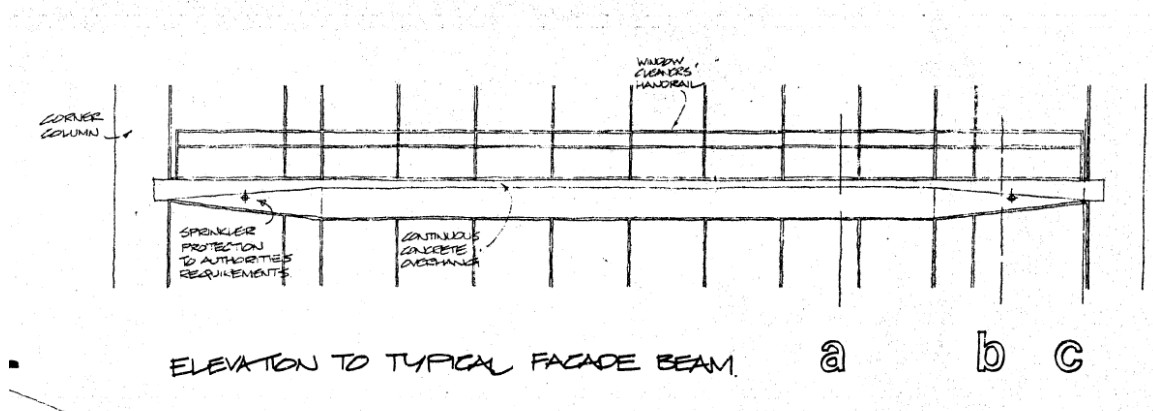


Figure 7. Detail drawing of a façade beam (BAP).



Figure 8. The building in 1984 (City of Melbourne Libraries online Heritage Collection, Reference no. Butler13724).



Figure 9. The ground and lower levels of the west elevation in 1984 (City of Melbourne Libraries online Heritage Collection, Reference no. Butler13723).

SITE DESCRIPTION

The Former Australia Pacific House at 136-144 Exhibition Street is an 11-storey commercial building located on the east side of Exhibition Street between Bourke Street and Little Collins Street.

Constructed from 1975-1978 to a design by McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

The building is rectangular in form with narrow front and rear facades facing Exhibition Street and Westwood Place at the rear, and broad facades parallel to Bourke Street. Although not located on a corner site, the adjacent low-rise building at the corner of Bourke Street enables a clear view of the north façade of the building. The service core abuts an adjacent building to the south and is recessed at both the west end (Exhibition Street) and the east end (Westwood Place), allowing the insertion of windows in the upper levels of the south wall. A single storey shopfront has been inserted in the recess at Exhibition Street.

The structure of the tower results in a contrasting articulation of the main facades to the west and north. The building is of reinforced concrete column and slab construction throughout with prestressed and post-tensioned concrete T-beams, running in a north-south direction across all floors as a single span, providing support to the concrete floor slabs. Clearly expressing the structure of the building, the ten bow-shaped edge beams of each floor form part of the front (west) and rear (east) facades. These distinctively shaped T-beams span between concrete corner piers and alternate with continuous strips of lightly framed glazing, forming a distinctly horizontal composition.

In contrast, the north façade is a glazed screen which is set behind a grid of round concrete columns and broad concrete spandrels, with safety rails set between columns. A deep concrete parapet, which crowns this façade, has been used for large visible signage.

Architectural drawings indicate that a bush hammered concrete finish was applied to the main façade and an off-form concrete finish was applied to the columns. It appears that these finishes may have been retained.

The ground floor foyer, with mezzanine level, has been modified with shopfronts inserted in Exhibition Street. As a result, the lower concrete T-beam on the front façade has been obscured (or possibly removed). The original architectural scheme included a basement garden court accessed by a curved stair and ground level bridge. This is no longer evident from the public realm.

INTEGRITY

The Former Australia Pacific House, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building above street level, remains highly intact from its original 1975-1978 construction. Works to the building at street level have altered the original design at this frontage.

Overall, the building retains a high degree of architectural integrity to the Post-War Modernist style in fabric, form and detail. While the building has undergone alterations at street level, these do not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the place as a fine example of a Modernist multi-storey commercial building.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The Former Australia Pacific House at 136-144 Exhibition Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of a 1960s to

mid-1970s multi-storey commercial building design. In its use of prestressed and post-tensioned concrete beams, the building demonstrates the advances made in concrete technology from the 1960s, while the trabeated structural system is clearly expressed on the north façade of the building with a grid of concrete columns and broad concrete spandrels set in front of a glazed screen. Despite modifications made to the building at street level, the upper facades of the Former Australia-Pacific House remain highly intact to its original design and can be clearly observed from Exhibition Street and Bourke Street.

There are a number of buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the Former Australia Pacific House. These are detailed below.

State-significant places

A small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne have been assessed as being of State-level significance and are included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). These include:

- Total House, 170-90 Russell Street (Bogle & Banfield 1964-65; VHR H2329 & HO1095)
- Former Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-44 Bourke Street (Peter Muller 1966-69)
- Victorian Government Offices, Treasury Reserve Precinct (Yuncken Freeman 1967-68 – outside the Hoddle Grid)
- Eagle House, 473 Bourke Street (Yuncken Freeman 1971-72; VHR H1807 & HO901)
- BHP House, 130-148 William Street (Yuncken Freeman 1969-72; VHR H1699 & HO767).

Locally-significant places

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from this period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme on a permanent basis. Those that are, are generally currently included within Heritage Precincts but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places, as follows:

Precinct Heritage Overlay



Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street, (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1974) included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct (Non-contributory).



Wales Corner, 221-231 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1964-66) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Swanston Street) Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, 251-257 Collins Street, (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 19741-73 included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Flinders Lane) (Non-contributory).

One individual heritage place recently included in a site-specific Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis is the Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1966) (HO1213):



Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

Other examples

Despite the demolition of many 1960s and 1970s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the advancement of construction techniques from the 1960s through to the mid 1970s and demonstrate the broad range of design approaches of the period. The podiums of the majority of these places have been modified at street level. Examples include:



Former RACV Club, 111-129 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961) (Interim HO1068)



Office Building, 178-188 William Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1972-73)



Royal Insurance Group Building, 430-442 Collins Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1965) (Interim HO1010)



Office Building, 516-520 Collins Street (architect unknown, c1974)



Former Guardian Building, 454-456 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1960-61)



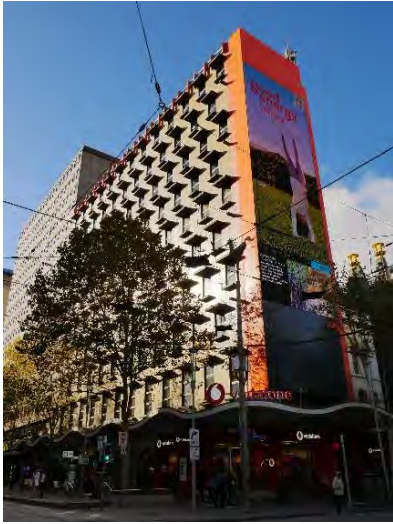
Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building, 155-161 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961-62)



Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



MLA Building, 308-336 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1963)



Royal Mail House, 255-267 Bourke Street (D Graeme Lumsden, 1963)



Former Sleigh Corner Building, 158-164 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1964)



The Former Houston Building, 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kolle & Associates, 1965)



AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street (Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1965-69)



Former Dalgety House, 457-471 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp & Walker, 1966-68)



Former State Saving Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1967-68)



Former Legal & General House, 375-383 Collins Street (B Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking, 1967)



Former AMP Building, 344-350 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1966-68)



Equitable House, 335-349 Little Collins Street (unknown architect, 1968)



Former Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street (Meldrum & Partners with Peddle Thorp Walker, 1968-70)



Former Methodist Church Centre, 130-134 Little Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1966-67)



Cowan House, 457-469 Little Collins Street (E & G Kollé, 1969)



Lonsdale Exchange, 447-553 Lonsdale Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1969)



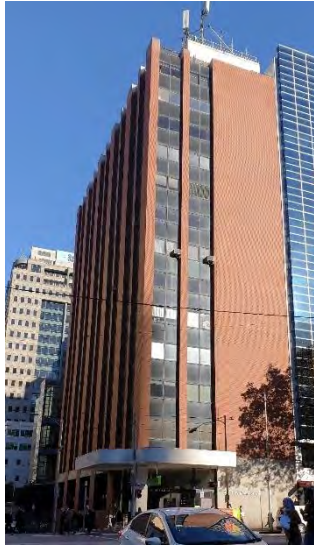
Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



Former Bryson Centre, 174-192 Exhibition Street (Perrot Lyon Timlock & Kesa, 1970-72)



Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building, 359-373 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, c1972-75)



Nubrick House, 269-275 William Street (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1972)



Former Law Department Building, 221-231 Queen Street (Fischer Group, 1972)



Former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch, 85-91 Queen Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1973)



Former MLC Building, 303-317 Collins Street (Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, c1970-1973)



Office Building, 589-603 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp de Preu, 1973-75)

Analysis

As a fine, highly intact and highly representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building, the Former Australia-Pacific House at 136-144 Exhibition Street clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey office buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne. Similar to a number of 1960s to mid-1970s buildings listed above, the subject building clearly demonstrates this class of place.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓ **CRITERION A**
Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).

CRITERION B
Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).

CRITERION C
Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).

✓ **CRITERION D**
Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).

CRITERION E
Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).

CRITERION F
Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)

CRITERION G
Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).

CRITERION H
Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an Individual Heritage Place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-4)	No
INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

OTHER

N/A

REFERENCES

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- McIntyre Partnership, 'About', <<https://mcintyrepartnership.com/about-1>>, accessed 2 July 2019.
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- The Sydney Morning Herald*.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

**Central Activities District
Conservation Study 1985** Ungraded

**Central City Heritage
Review 1993** Ungraded

**Review of Heritage
Overlay Listings in the
CBD 2002** Ungraded

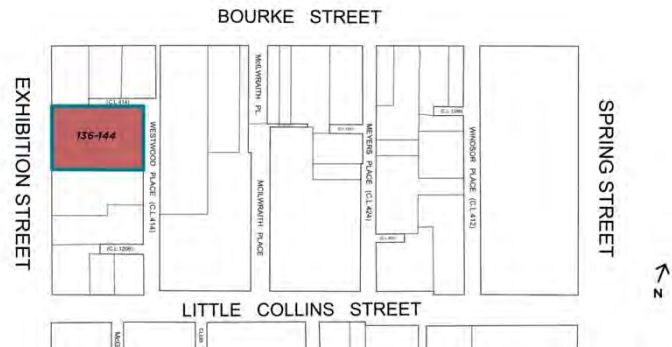
**Central City Heritage
Review 2011** Ungraded

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Former Australia Pacific House



PS ref no: HO 1331XXXX



What is significant?

The Former Australia Pacific House, 136-144 Exhibition Street, a multi-storey office building constructed from 1975-1978.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing
- The building's structural system
- The building's high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations made at street level are not significant.

How it is significant?

The Former Australia Pacific House at 136-144 Exhibition Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

Constructed from 1975-1978 to a design by McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, the Former Australia Pacific House has a clear association with the postwar building boom which transformed central Melbourne into a modern high-rise city. The design of these commercial buildings from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s – many of which were architect designed – was driven by the commercial demands and the prestige afforded by a dominant city presence (Criterion A).

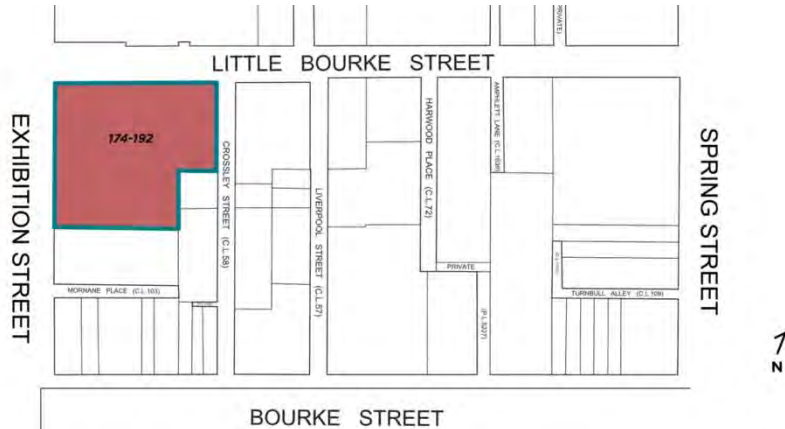
The Former Australia Pacific House is a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist building. The building strongly reflects the style which was popular in the 1960s to the mid-

1970s, particularly in central Melbourne. Constructed as an 11-storey structure, the Former Australia Pacific House clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a later postwar commercial building, including walls which clearly express the trabeated structural system with alternating horizontal strips of glazing and distinctive solid spandrels to the front and rear facades, as well as a grid of solid spandrels and round columns to the north, and the use of materials such as precast concrete. These demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style (Criterion D).

Primary source

[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\)](#)~~Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)~~ [Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\) \(updated March 2022\)](#)

SITE NAME	Former Bryson Centre [also known as Hotel Melbourne, Rydges Hotel (current name)]
STREET ADDRESS	174-192 Exhibition Street, Melbourne
PROPERTY ID	103621



SURVEY DATE:	October 2019	SURVEY BY:	GJM Heritage
HERITAGE INVENTORY	No	EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY	No
PLACE TYPE	Individual Heritage Place	PROPOSED CATEGORY	Significant
		FORMER GRADE	Ungraded
DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:	Perrott Lyon Timlock & Kesa	BUILDER:	CDF Hooker Ltd
DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:	1970-1972

THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation focused on the postwar history of the site and did not address associations with Aboriginal people or organisations	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style 1.9 Beyond the curtain wall
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Buiness and finance
5 Living in the city centre	5.2 Hotels

LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Café/Restaurant, Hairdresser, Office, Retail/Takeaway, Club, Workshop, Stables, Medical
1920s	Café/Restaurant, Retail/Workshop, Office, Club, Motor Garage
1960s	Retail, Merchant

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Extent of overlay: To extent of property boundary

SUMMARY

The Former Bryson Centre, located on the north-east corner of Exhibition and Little Bourke streets, was designed by architects Perrott Lyon Timlock & Kesa for owners, the Australian Mutual Provident Society (AMP) as an investment property. The consulting engineers were W E Bassett & Partners. The building was constructed between 1970 and 1972, by builders CDF Hooker Ltd. The 23-storey building incorporated office space, a 600-seat cinema, restaurants, convention centres and a 292-room hotel, named Hotel Melbourne, which was located on the upper 13 floors of the building. The Bryson Centre was described at the time of its opening as a 'city within a city – every need is either within the hotel walls or within walking distance outside'.

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

Beyond the curtain wall

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding, screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

Business and finance in the postwar period

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17). Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

Hotels

The lack of hotel accommodation was a cause for concern in central Melbourne in the 1950s and 1960s. In the lead up to the 1956 Olympic Games, it was reported that the city's hotel accommodation was not only far below international standards, but did not provide enough beds to host large numbers of tourists. Up until that time, hotels primarily focused on the provision of food and drink; there was no legal requirement to provide accommodation. To boost the number of hotel beds in the lead up to the 1956 Games, amended liquor laws were introduced that made it essential for every hotel to offer lodgings. This new law contributed to the closure and demolition of an unprecedented number of city hotels in the postwar period. Between 1951 and 1961, 23 hotels in central Melbourne closed, with only five top city hotels from Melbourne's bygone era – Scott's, Menzies', the Oriental, the Windsor and the Federal – remaining. Within a decade, all but one (the Windsor) had been demolished (Annear 2005:193).

Despite a push to provide more hotels with higher standards in time for the Olympic Games, ultimately only a handful were constructed. Hosie's Hotel (1954-56) at the corner of Elizabeth and Flinders streets, was one of the first modern hotels to be built in central Melbourne (NTAV 2014:42).

The 1960s saw the opening of Australia's first high-rise, American-style hotel. With the increasing use of faster jet planes, international travel for both luxury and business purposes became a glamorous pursuit. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, US-based hotels such as the Hilton and the Pan Am-owned Intercontinental began establishing the first international hotel chains.

The Southern Cross Hotel (now demolished) opened in 1962 as Australia's first modern hotel of the jet age – a sign that the city had established itself as an international destination (Annear 2005:186). It occupied a large site on Bourke Street in central Melbourne, formerly occupied by the grand Eastern Market. The hotel, owned by Pan American Airways, set the new standard for city hotels in Melbourne and its central plaza, shopping arcades, and ten-pin bowling alley represented a new concept of public space (Goad). The Southern Cross Hotel remained Melbourne's premier hotel into the early 1980s, famously hosting The Beatles during their 1964 tour and national events such as the Logies and the Brownlow (Brown-May 2005). The Bryson Centre, 174-192 Exhibition Street (1970-72), was one of a number of high-rise buildings planned for the eastern end of the city in the early 1970s to 'meet the tourist boom expected with the opening of the new airport at Tullamarine' (*Age* 1970:2). The 23-storey Bryson Centre incorporated office space, a 600-seat cinema, restaurants, convention centres and a 292-room hotel, named Hotel Melbourne, which was located on the upper 13 floors of the building. The Bryson Centre was described by the *Age* as a 'city within a city – every need is either within the hotel walls or within walking distance outside' (*Age* 1972:19).

SITE HISTORY

The Former Bryson Centre on the north-east corner of Exhibition and Little Bourke streets was designed by architects Perrott Lyon Timlock & Kesa for owners, the Australian Mutual Provident Society (AMP) as an investment property. The consulting engineers were W E Bassett & Partners (LV:V9047/F279; *Age*, 27 Nov 1972:19-20). The City of Melbourne received a building permit application for the multi-storey building in March 1970 (with a total estimated cost of \$5,070,000) (BAI). The building was constructed between 1970 and 1972, by builders CDF Hooker Ltd (*Age*, 27 Nov 1972:19).

Architectural drawings date stamped 1970 show the original designs of the elevations and ground floor layout of The Bryson Centre (Figure 1 - Figure 3). The building was let in part to the hotel group Noahs Ltd from July 1972, Bryson Industries Ltd from April 1973 and Town Cinema Investments Pty Ltd from October 1973 (LV:V9047/F279). Bryson Industries Ltd was the Australian distributor of Jaguar cars. In the postwar period, Bryson Industries owned showrooms and workshops in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide (Bryson).

The development was discussed in contemporary newspapers and architectural journals. *The Canberra Times* reported in June 1970 (27 Jun 1970:8) that the AMP Society had announced plans for a \$6,500,000, 23-storey building on the corner of Exhibition and Little Bourke streets, to be called the 'Bryson Centre' (*Canberra Times*, 27 Jun 1970:8). An advertisement published in June 1972 advertised that 'Motor hotel group Noahs Ltd has added the 297-room Bryson Centre Motor Hotel in Melbourne's Exhibition Street, to its rapidly growing chain.' Advertisements noted that 'Noah's Hotel Melbourne' was due to open in late 1972 (Figure 4) (*Canberra Times*, 2 Jun 1972:15; 20 Oct 1972:4).

Upon completion of the new building in late 1972, *The Age* (27 Nov 1972:19-20) featured 'The Bryson Centre' in a two-page spread. The building was 'planned as a city within a city' comprising '40,000 square feet of office space, a 600-seat cinema, restaurants, taverns and convention centres', a 292-room hotel (which started at the 10th floor) and a rooftop heated swimming pool, supposedly Melbourne's highest swimming pool at the time. A Jaguar showroom occupied the northern, low-scale section of the building. Hotel Melbourne was opened by the Victorian Premier (Figure 5 - Figure 8) (*Age*, 27 Nov 1972:19-20; AIA, 1972:22).

The interior of Hotel Melbourne was designed by Peter J Murphy, in conjunction with the architects. The public areas of the hotel were named after a historical theme which was incorporated into the design of the spaces, such as 'The Federation Tavern' (AIA, 1972:23). Artist Robin Angwin was commissioned by AMP to create a number of paintings and prints for the hotel and potter Rynne Tanton was commissioned to create works that were displayed in the foyer (Age, 27 Nov 1972:19-20).

A 1984 photo shows the building with the name 'Hotel Melbourne' at parapet level and 'Bryson Centre' above the lower floors (Figure 10). In 1985, Hospitality Holdings Ltd purchased the '24-storey Bryson Centre, which included the 300-room Noahs Hotel Melbourne and a nine-storey office and cinema centre' (Canberra Times, 24 Jul 1985:9).

Bobby McGees entertainment venue is a long-term occupant of the building, first advertising at the location in the early 1990s (Age, 13 Nov 1991:78). In the 1990s the complex was called 'The Bryson, a Rydges Hotel' (Age, 6 Jun 1993:80). The building continues to serve as Rydges Hotel in 2019.

Perrott Lyon Timlock & Kesa, architects

Perrott Lyon Timlock & Kesa was established in 1971 from Leslie M Perrott & Partners, becoming Perrott Lyon Mathieson in 1976.

Leslie Marsh Perrott was born in Gippsland, Victoria and studied architecture at the Melbourne Technical College. Following a stint in New York, he established his own Melbourne-based practice in 1914 and specialised in residential design, with a particular emphasis on reinforced concrete for domestic construction.

Perrott's son, Leslie Junior joined the firm following graduation in 1951 and set about expanding the office to capitalise on the postwar boom. One of their early works was the Southern Cross Hotel, in association with the American architect Welton-Becket, which opened in 1962. They were also engaged on the Princes Gate Project (1963), which included the Gas & Fuel Buildings on Flinders Street, later demolished to make way for Federation Square (Statham 2012:537-8).

In 1971, the firm became Perrott Lyon Timlock and Kesa. Within central Melbourne, the firm designed the Bryson Centre at 174-192 Exhibition Street (1970-72), Nauru House at 80 Collins Street (1972-77), MMBW House at 120 Spencer Street (1976) and the polygonal Ansett House at 501 Swanston Street (c 1976-78). The firm was also responsible for the design of Museum underground station (now Melbourne Central) which formed part of the Melbourne City Loop rail project (Statham 2012:537-8).

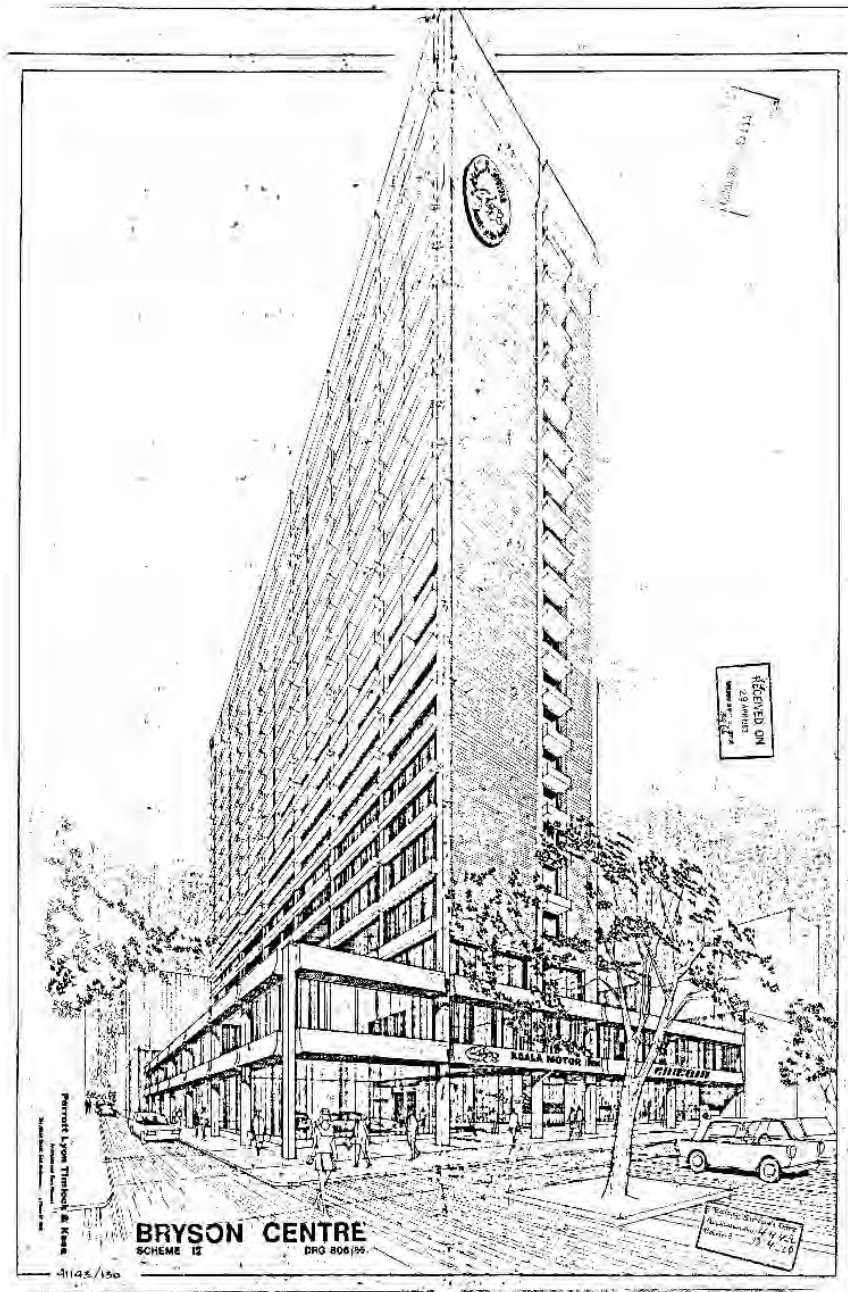


Figure 1. Architectural drawing of The Bryson Centre. Drawing by Perrott Lyon Timlock & Kesa, date stamped 1970 (BAP).

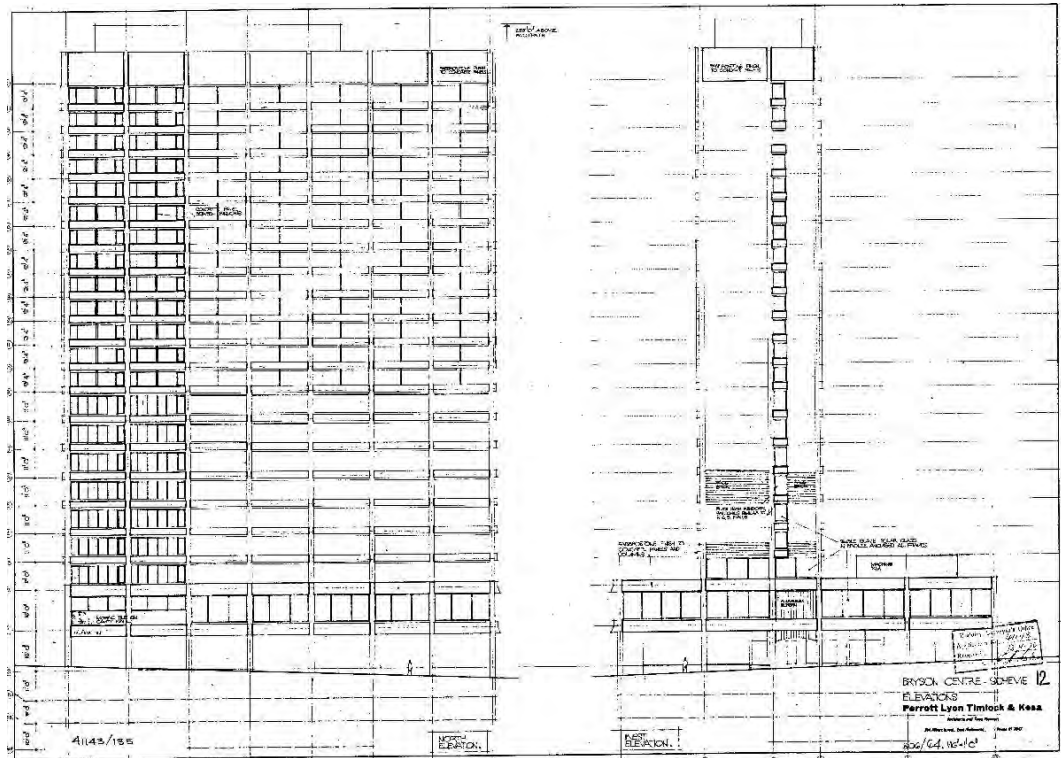


Figure 2. North elevation (left) to Little Bourke Street and west elevation (right) to Exhibition Street. The Bryson Centre, drawing by Perrott Lyon Timlock & Kesa, date stamped 1970 (BAP).

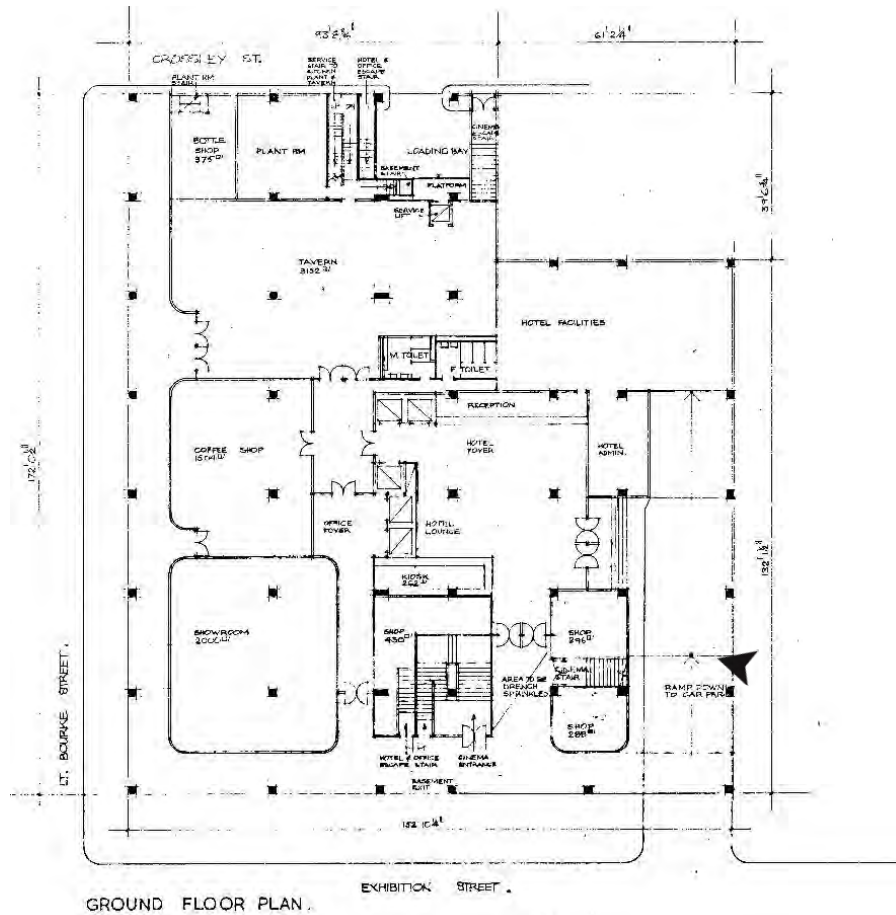


Figure 3. Ground floor plan. Drawings by Perrott Lyon Timlock & Kesa, date stamped 1970 (BAP).



Figure 4. An illustration of the building, published in October 1972, noting that Noah's Hotel Melbourne was due to open late 1972 (*Canberra Times*, 20 Oct 1972:4).

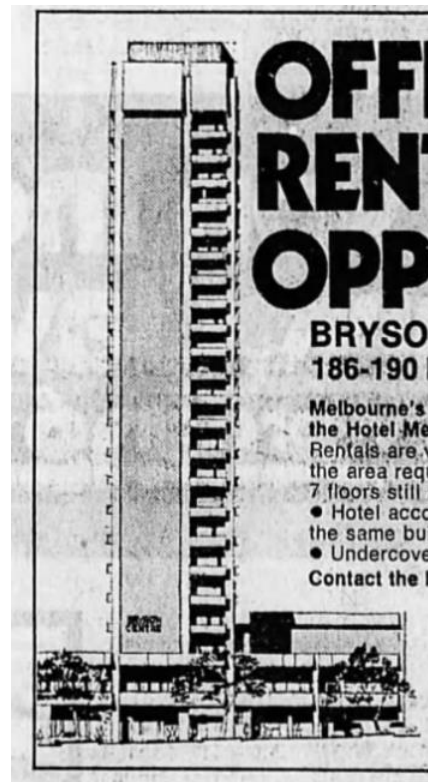


Figure 5. An illustration published in November 1972 (*Age*, 9 Nov 1972:15).



Figure 6. Photo of the newly completed hotel, published in the November/December 1972 issue of *Architecture in Australia* (AIA, Nov/Dec 1972:22).



Figure 7. An image of the newly completed building published in *The Age* in November 1972 (*Age*, 27 Nov 1972:19).

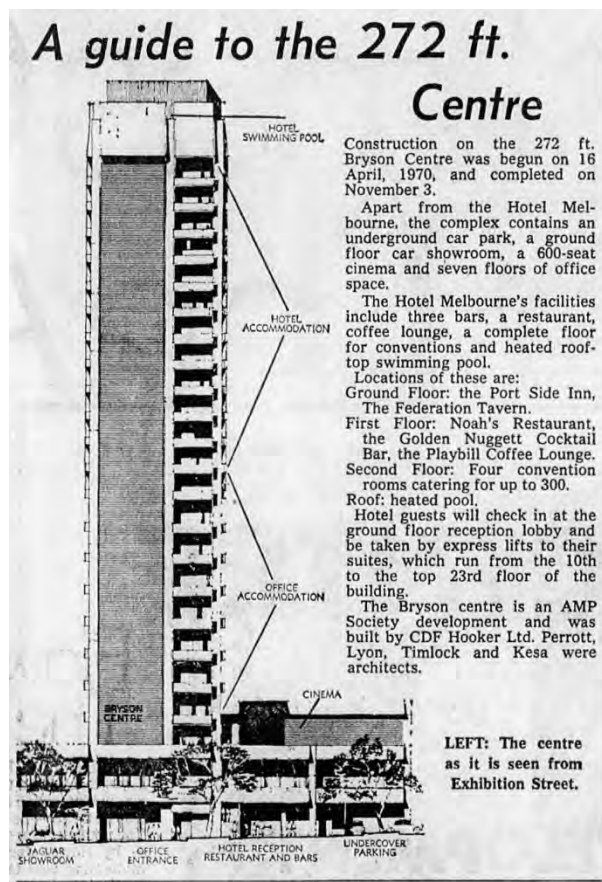


Figure 8. An explanation of the occupancies of the newly completed building, published in *The Age* in November 1972 (*Age*, 27 No 1972:19).



Figure 9. Detail of a c1975 photo showing Hotel Melbourne in the background (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers photographer, Image H2000.195/28).



Figure 10. The subject site in 1984 (City of Melbourne Libraries online Heritage Collection, reference no. Butler 13733).

SITE DESCRIPTION

The Former Bryson Centre is a 23-storey commercial building located on the south-east corner of Exhibition Street and Little Bourke Street. The building has main frontages to both streets and a secondary frontage to Crossley Street to the west. Constructed in 1970-72 to a design by Perrot Lyon Timlock & Kesa, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

The dominant element of this building is a tall, slim central tower which sits on an expansive double-storey podium that extends to the boundaries of the site. Running in an east-west direction across the site, the tower is flanked to the north and south by the lower podium. A two-level basement carpark under the whole building is accessed from the south end of the complex in Exhibition Street.

The building is of reinforced concrete column and slab construction, with the structure clearly expressed on the external facades. The north façade of the tower and sections of the other tower facades, contain sets of glazing with projecting precast concrete spandrels and balconies which span between the structural columns, forming a strong grid-like pattern. Precast concrete elements have an exposed aggregate finish. Framed with bronze anodised aluminium frames, the window mullions and transoms are indistinct, enabling the glazing to appear as strong horizontal elements. Intermediate mullions divide the upper bays and window sets into two parts, providing a subtle contrast between the upper and lower facades of the tower. This also reflected the original dual function of the tower - the upper floors provided hotel accommodation and the lower floors were designed for office use. The building is crowned by a solid parapet, divided into bays by vertical insets which continue the line of the façade columns below, which has provided a name plate for the building. Large vertical expanses of face brickwork on the south, west and east facades contrast with the glazed areas of these facades.

The form of the two-level podium at the base of the building, with continuous glazing and broad fascias, has been retained; however the original concrete columns and fascias have been recently reclad. Sections of face brickwork (some overpainted) have been retained at the rear of the building. At ground level, the building is recessed to form a raised balcony to the main frontages to Little Bourke Street and the northern end of Exhibition Street. The main entrance to the building is located in Exhibition Street, flanked by the raised balcony and the entrance to the underground carpark at the southern extremity. A low brick façade with deep fascia is just visible behind the lower podium to the south of the central tower. This large section of the complex originally housed a cinema.

INTEGRITY

The Former Bryson Centre, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building above street level, remains highly intact to its original 1970-72 construction. Recent recladding of the structure and associated works at street level has altered the original design at this frontage.

Overall, the building retains a very high degree of architectural integrity to the Post-War Modernist style in fabric, form and detail. While the building has undergone alterations at street level, these do not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the place as a fine example of a Post-War Modernist multi-storey building.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The Former Bryson Centre at 174-192 Exhibition Street was constructed as a large multi-functional building containing office space, hotel accommodation with roof top swimming pool, cinema,

restaurants and retail space at the ground floor, however the external appearance of the place is similar to the typical multi-storey city office building of the period. It is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of early 1960s to mid-1970s multi-storey commercial building design. Set on a double-storey podium base, the trabeated structural system of the building is clearly expressed on the grid-like external facades of the slim central tower. This is of particular note across the broad north façade where sets of glazing and projecting precast concrete spandrels and balconies span between structural columns. Despite modifications made to the building at street level, the upper facades of the Former Bryson Centre remain highly intact to their original design and can be clearly observed from Exhibition Street and Little Bourke Street.

There are a number of buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the Former Bryson Centre. These are detailed below.

State-significant places

A small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne have been assessed as being of State-level significance and are included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). These include:

- Total House, 170-90 Russell Street (Bogle & Banfield 1964-65; VHR H2329 & HO1095)
- Former Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-44 Bourke Street (Peter Muller 1966-69)
- Victorian Government Offices, Treasury Reserve Precinct (Yuncken Freeman 1967-68 – outside the Hoddle Grid)
- Eagle House, 473 Bourke Street (Yuncken Freeman 1971-72; VHR H1807 & HO901)
- BHP House, 130-148 William Street (Yuncken Freeman 1969-72; VHR H1699 & HO767).

Locally-significant places

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from this period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme on a permanent basis. Those that are, are generally currently included within Heritage Precincts but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places, as follows:

Precinct Heritage Overlay

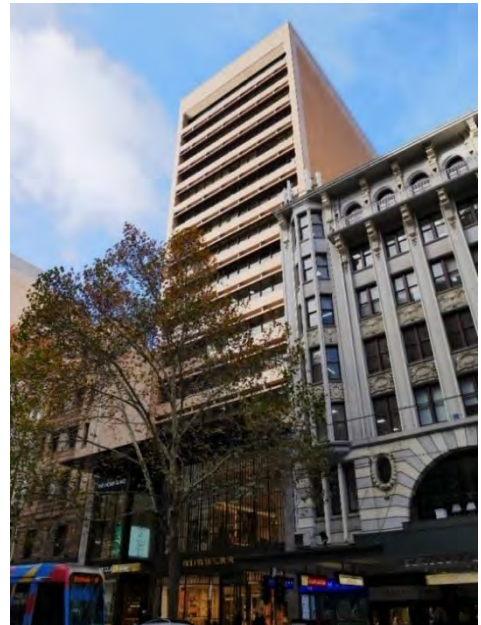
Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street, (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1974) included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct (Non-contributory).



Wales Corner, 221-231 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1964-66) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Swanston Street) Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, 251-257 Collins Street, (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 19741-73 included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Flinders Lane) (Non-contributory).

One individual heritage place recently included in a site-specific Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis is the Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1966) (HO1213):



Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

Other examples

Despite the demolition of many 1960s and 1970s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the advancement of construction techniques from the 1960s through to the mid 1970s and demonstrate the broad range of design approaches of the period. The podiums of the majority of these places have been modified at street level. Examples include:



Former RACV Club, 111-129 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961) (Interim HO1068)



Former Australia Pacific House, 136-144 Exhibition Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1975-78)



Royal Insurance Group Building, 430-442 Collins Street, (Yuncken Freeman, 1965) (Interim HO1010)



Office Building, 516-520 Collins Street (architect unknown, c1974)



Former Guardian Building, 454-456 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1960-61)



Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building, 155-161 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961-62)



Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



MLA Building, 308-336 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1963)



Royal Mail House, 255-267 Bourke Street (D Graeme Lumsden, 1963)



Former Sleigh Corner Building, 158-164 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1964)



The Former Houston Building, 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kolle & Associates, 1965)



AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street (Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1965-69)



Former Dalgety House, 457-471 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp & Walker, 1966-68)



Former State Saving Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1967-68)



Former Legal & General House, 375-383 Collins Street (B Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking, 1967)



Former AMP Building, 344-350 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1966-68)



Equitable House, 335-349 Little Collins Street (unknown architect, 1968)



Former Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street (Meldrum & Partners with Peddle Thorp Walker, 1968-70)



Former Methodist Church Centre, 130-134 Little Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1966-67)



Cowan House, 457-469 Little Collins Street (E & G Kolle, 1969)



Lonsdale Exchange, 447-553 Lonsdale Street
(Commonwealth Department of Works, 1969)



Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William Street
(Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



Office Building, 178-188 William Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1972-73)



Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building,
359-373 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon,
c1972-75)



Nubrick House, 269-275 William Street (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1972)



Former Law Department Building, 221-231 Queen Street
(Fischer Group, 1972)



Former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch, 85-91 Queen Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1973)



Former MLC Building, 303-317 Collins Street (Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, c1970-1973)



Office Building, 589-603 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp de Preu, 1973-75)

Analysis

As a fine, highly intact and highly representative example of a Post-War Modernist style building, the Former Bryson Centre clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey commercial buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne. Similar to a number of 1960s to mid-1970s buildings listed above, the subject building clearly demonstrates this class of place.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓	<p>CRITERION A Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION B Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).</p>
	<p>CRITERION C Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).</p>
✓	<p>CRITERION D Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).</p>
	<p>CRITERION E Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION F Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)</p>
	<p>CRITERION G Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION H Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an Individual Heritage Place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-4)	No
INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

OTHER

N/A

REFERENCES

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The Canberra Times [A.C.T.]

PREVIOUS STUDIES

**Central Activities District
Conservation Study 1985** Ungraded

**Central City Heritage
Review 1993** Ungraded

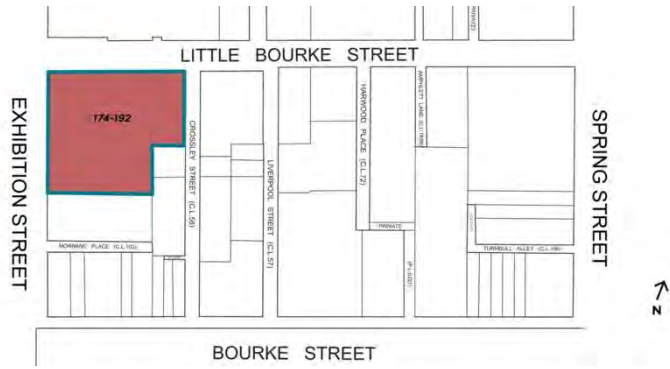
**Review of Heritage
Overlay Listings in the
CBD 2002** Ungraded

**Central City Heritage
Review 2011** Ungraded

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: The Former Bryson Centre

PS ref no: HO1332XXXX





What is significant?

The Former Bryson Centre, 174-192 Exhibition Street, a multi-storey commercial building constructed in 1970-72.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing
- The building's high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations made to the lower levels of the building are not significant.

How it is significant?

The Former Bryson Centre at 174-192 Exhibition Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

Constructed in 1970-72 to a design by Perrott Lyon Timlock & Kesa, the Former Bryson Centre has a clear association with the postwar building boom which transformed central Melbourne into a modern high-rise city. The design of these commercial buildings from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s – many of which were architect designed – was driven by the commercial demands and the prestige afforded by a dominant city presence (Criterion A).

Containing a range of facilities for both tourists and businesspeople, the Former Bryson Centre was described on opening in 1972 as a 'city within a city'. Together with the earlier Southern Cross Hotel, which was described in a similar manner on opening in 1962 (since demolished), and Collins Place (completed 1981), this building demonstrates the development of this multi-functional building type in central Melbourne (Criterion A).

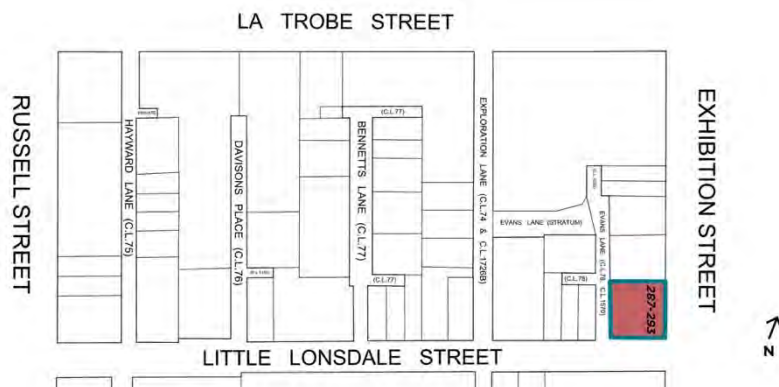
The Former Bryson Centre is a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building. The multi-functional building combining office space, hotel accommodation, public amenities and retail space, strongly reflects an architectural style which was popular from the 1960s

through to the mid 1970s, particularly in central Melbourne, and demonstrates an innovative approach to commercial development in the 1970s. Constructed as a 23-storey structure, the Former Bryson Centre clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a later postwar commercial building, including a dominant podium base, grid-like walls which clearly express the trabeated structural system and alternating horizontal strips of glazing and solid projecting spandrels/balconies, as well as the use of materials such as precast concrete panels. These demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style (Criterion D).

Primary source

[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\)](#)~~Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)~~ (updated March 2022)

SITE NAME	Former Exhibition Towers [also known as Exhibition Apartments (current name)]
STREET ADDRESS	287-293 Exhibition Street, Melbourne
PROPERTY ID	103609



SURVEY DATE:	October 2019	SURVEY BY:	GJM Heritage
HERITAGE INVENTORY	No	EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY	No
PLACE TYPE	Individual Heritage Place	PROPOSED CATEGORY	Significant
DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:	Kenneth McDonald & Associates	FORMER GRADE	Ungraded
DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	BUILDER:	Not known
		DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:	1969-1971

THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation focused on the postwar history of the site and did not address associations with Aboriginal people or organisations	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style 1.9 Beyond the curtain wall
5 Living in the city centre	5.1 Housing and lodging

LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Retail, Hairdresser, Workshop
1920s	Retail
1960s	Café/Restaurant, Retail, Workshop, Manufacturer, Carrier

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Extent of overlay: To extent of property boundary

SUMMARY

The Former Exhibition Towers, a multi-storey building on the north-west corner of Exhibition and Little Lonsdale streets was designed by architect Kenneth McDonald & Associates, for owners Danbry Pty Ltd. The building was constructed in 1969-1971. It was initially designed and advertised as residential apartments but opened as the Courtesy Inn Motel in 1971.

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

Beyond the curtain wall

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding, screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

Housing and lodging

The provision of accommodation has always been a major function of Australian city centres, and has included the establishment of hotels, hostels, boarding houses and serviced apartments, as well as terraces, flats and medium-density housing. Since the 1950s, the market sought by inner-city

developers has moved to an almost exclusively middle- to higher-income group. New forms of accommodation from the 1950s replaced older buildings with high-cost, high-rise buildings for a restricted range of users (Marsden 2000:53).

The postwar era saw the introduction of apartments and flats in the well-established inner suburbs of South Yarra and St Kilda, spreading to Caulfield, Malvern, Camberwell, Hawthorn and Prahran. Victoria's first block of 'own-your-own' or 'OYO' flats were built in Hawthorn in 1949 and the subsequent introduction of strata title legislation by architect and Lord Mayor Bernard Evans led to the proliferation of this housing type from the early 1950s (Heritage Alliance 2008:23).

The apartment boom reached the inner city in the late 1960s, facilitated by the *Conveyancing (Strata Titles) Act* of 1961. An Australian innovation, the legislation allowed each lot or apartment to have its own title deed (Stent 2018). Many émigré architects, who were experienced in higher density living in Europe, specialised in apartment design. Viennese-born architect Kurt Popper, for example, built two blocks of residential flats in central Melbourne – Park Tower, 199-207 Spring Street (1969) and 13-15 Collins Street (1970) (Heritage Alliance 2008:21).

Although marketed as a glamorous and convenient lifestyle, high-rise city apartment living was not popularly embraced. Exhibition Towers, an 11-storey residential building located at the north-west corner of Exhibition Street and Little Lonsdale Street, was designed and built as a residential and commercial building. Constructed in 1968-69 to a design by Kenneth McDonald & Associates, the building was an endeavour to provide 'OYO' flats in the city centre. 'High prices, high bills and Melbourne's conservative living style' contributed to difficulties in finding buyers for the units and the building was converted to the Courtesy Inn Motel in 1971 (*Age* 17 February 1971:3). It was also reported in 1971 that Park Tower was using its tenants' car spaces as a public car park and the flats were being let on short-term leases. Similarly, the two-month-old 13-15 Collins Street apartments contemplated filling its lower four floors with shops, offices and medical practices (*Age* 17 February 1971:3, Figure 8).

In 1974, the MCC introduced a policy to encourage residents back to the city through the construction of a variety of residential typologies. However, because development was market driven, it was predominantly offices and retail spaces that were constructed in the city centre (Marsden 2000:54, 112).

SITE HISTORY

The multi-storey building on the north-west corner of Exhibition and Little Lonsdale streets was designed by architect Kenneth McDonald & Associates, for owners Danbry Pty Ltd. The building was constructed in 1969-1971, initially designed and advertised as flats. The consulting engineers were John Connell & Associates (BAP).

Architectural drawings for the project, dated June 1968 and entitled 'Flats at 287-293 Exhibition Street,' show the key elevations (Figure 1). One drawing dated June 1968 had an annotation that the 11-storey building was intended to have shops on the ground floor and a total of 55 flats comprising 44 one-bedroom units and 11 bachelor units. Later floor plans dated October 1970 show the layout of the ground floor with a reception area and dining room, and a typical floor plan comprising five units (Figure 2 & Figure 3) (BAP).

The City of Melbourne received a building permit application for the multi-storey building in March 1969 (with an estimated total value of \$600,000) (BAI). During the construction phase, the building

was advertised in newspapers and listed in the Sands & McDougall Directories as 'Exhibition Towers' (the directory annotated with 'Flats being built' in 1970) (S&Mc; *Age*, 7 Mar 1970:39). One advertisement described 'Exhibition Towers' with:

magnificent town units, designed for luxury living. Superb kitchen, fully laminated cupboards, ultra mod. bathrooms, separate laundry. Huge lounge and bedroom. From only \$10,000 (Age, 7 Mar 1970:39).

A photograph of the building under construction was published in May 1970 (Figure 4) with an advertisement entitled "'Exhibition Towers" O-Y-O (own your own) Flats in the heart of Melbourne,' with one-bedroom units priced from \$15,900 (*Age*, 2 May 1970:39).

In February 1971, *The Age* reported that the Exhibition Street development had changed from private flats to a motel use, opening as the Courtesy Inn Motel in February 1971. While the article stated that high-rise developers had difficulty finding buyers for highly-priced city units, it also quoted D J Ryan, the developer of the site, as saying, "I didn't convert this into a motel because the flats wouldn't sell, I turned it into a motel because a feasibility study shows that it would be more profitable as a motel' (*Age*, 17 Feb 1971:3).

The building served as the Courtesy Inn Motel and was occupied by the Lazy Leprechaun Restaurant in 1974 (S&Mc). In 1974, the high-rise units were again advertised for sale via strata title (*Age*, 14 Dec 1974:77). In 2019 the building is called Exhibition Apartments (CoMMaps).

Kenneth McDonald & Associates, architects

Kenneth McDonald (1927-1996) studied architecture at the University of Melbourne, during which period two of his student designs were published in the *Australian Home Beautiful* magazine. Following completion of his studies, McDonald gained employment in the Department of Works & Housing, at which time he also designed his own house in Balwyn North (1951). The residential design incorporated the innovative butterfly roof, not seen before in Melbourne, which was profiled in and popularised by a number of newspapers and magazines (Reeves).

In early 1953 McDonald published an article in the *Argus* that argued for the provision of modern hotels in central Melbourne, accompanied by his own scheme for a multi-storey hotel in Collins Street. Later in 1953 McDonald became advertising director of the influential Melbourne-based architecture magazine *Architecture & Arts*, and was Editor from 1953 to 1963 (Reeves).

McDonald continued his private architectural practice, with an interest in modern hotel architecture, designing Hotel International in Potts Point, Sydney (1956) and a holiday resort in Currumbin, Queensland (1960). One of his later designs was Exhibition Towers at 287-93 Exhibition Street, Melbourne, (1969-71), which opened as the Courtesy Inn Hotel. Other commissions in the 1950s and '60s primarily comprised residential projects and shopping centre developments (Reeves).

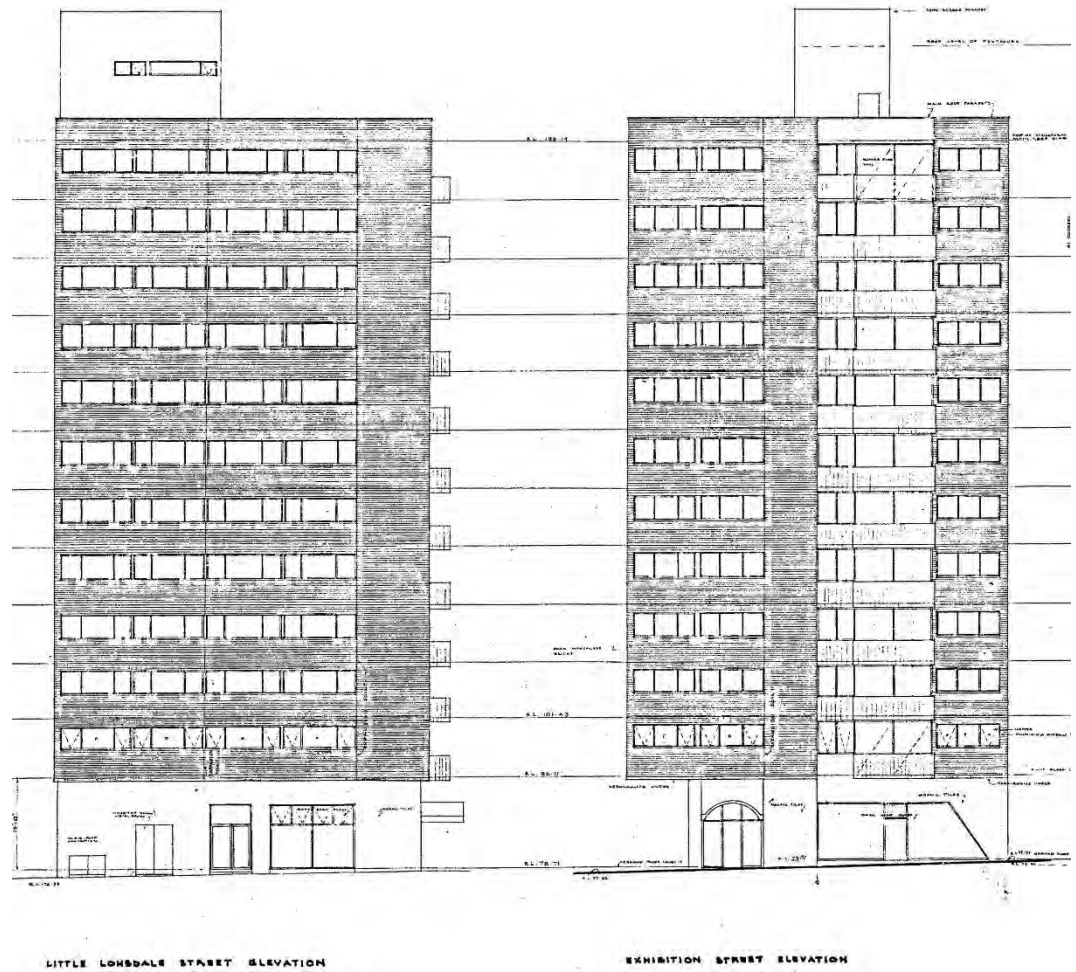


Figure 1. South elevation to Little Lonsdale Street (left) and east elevation to Exhibition street (right). Drawings by Kenneth McDonald & Associates, dated June 1968 (BAP).

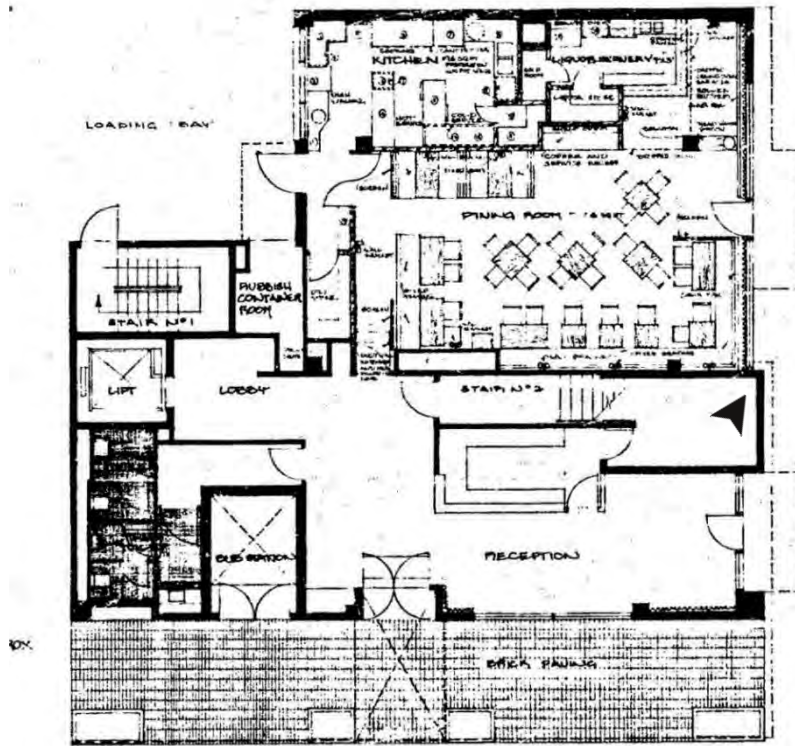


Figure 2. Ground floor plan detailing the reception and dining room areas. Drawing by Kenneth McDonald & Associates, dated October 1970 (BAP).

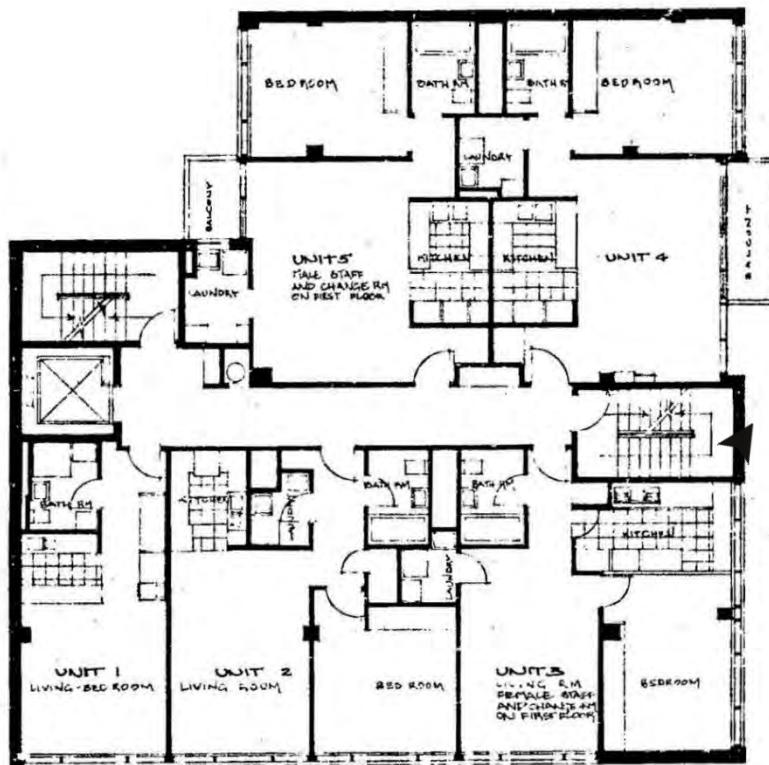


Figure 3. A typical floor plan of the residential floors, comprising five units. Drawing by Kenneth McDonald & Associates, dated October 1970 (BAP).



Figure 4. Image of the building under construction, published in May 1970 in a sales advertisement for the units (*Age*, 2 May 1970:39).



Figure 5. An image of the completed building, published in December 1974 as part of a sales advertisement for units (*Age*, 14 Dec 1974:77).

SITE DESCRIPTION

The Former Exhibition Towers at 287-293 Exhibition Street, is an 11-storey residential building located at the north-west corner of Exhibition and Little Lonsdale streets. The building has main frontages to both these streets and a secondary façade to Evans Lane which forms the western boundary of the site. Constructed in 1969-71 to a design by Kenneth McDonald & Associates, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

The building occupies the majority of the square corner site with a vacant loading dock area at the north-west corner. It is a reinforced concrete column and slab structure with curtain walls of beige brick, and sits on a prominent podium base which is deeply recessed under the south side of the tower. The main facades above street level contain rows of aluminium-framed windows which alternate with rows of brick spandrels. Both the Exhibition and Little Lonsdale street facades are asymmetrical with rows of windows which terminate at either broad or narrow brick piers at the corners of the building. The Exhibition Street façade contains a prominent contrasting bay of windows with rendered spandrels and a vertical stack of projecting balconies. A similar vertical row of balconies, and associated rows of windows, is located at the northern end of the west façade, facing Evans Lane. The remainder of the west façade is of plain face brickwork with the exception of a vertical row of hit-and-miss brickwork grilles which enable ventilation to each floor.

At street level, the tower cantilevers over the street level podium on the south side, creating a protected canopy to a deep Little Lonsdale Street entry, and a projecting arched canopy provides protection to the main Exhibition Street entrance. Street level openings to both Exhibition and Little Lonsdale streets appear to date from the original construction, however mosaic tile cladding (noted on the original architect's drawings) has been removed and alterations have been made recently to the northern window and door set in Exhibition Street. An arched canopy has been added to the Little Lonsdale Street entrance with later steel fencing enclosing the verandah space.

INTEGRITY

The Former Exhibition Towers, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building above street level, remains highly intact to its original construction in 1969-71. Works to the building at street level have altered the original design, although some original detailing remains.

Overall, the building retains a high degree of architectural integrity to the Post-War Modernist style in fabric, form and detail. While the building has undergone alterations at street level, these do not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the place as a fine example of a Post-War Modernist multi-storey residential building.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The Former Exhibition Towers at 287-293 Exhibition Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of 1960s to mid-1970s multi-storey residential building design. Located on a corner site, the building's solid external appearance with brick curtain walls, horizontal strips of aluminium-framed windows, prominent vertical row of projecting balconies and contrasting podium base, can be clearly observed from Exhibition Street. Despite minor changes to street-level facades, the upper facades of the Former Exhibition Towers remain highly intact to its original design.

Other Post-War Modernist residential buildings in the Hoddle Grid

The modern residential apartment building emerged as a building type in central Melbourne in the late 1960s and there are a small number of buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the Former Exhibition Towers. These are detailed below.



Park Tower, 199-207 Spring Street (Kurt Popper, 1969) (Interim HO1263)



Apartment Building, 13-15 Collins Street (Kurt Popper, 1970) Interim HO1265 & currently included as a Significant place in Collins East Precinct HO504



Treasury Gate, 93-101 Spring Street (Moore & Hammond, 1971) (Interim HO1262)

Analysis

As a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist residential building, the Former Exhibition Towers at 287-293 Exhibition Street clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey residential buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne. Similar to the three residential apartment buildings identified above and also recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as Individual Heritage Places, the Former Exhibition Towers clearly demonstrates this class of place.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓ **CRITERION A**
Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).

CRITERION B
Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).

CRITERION C
Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).

✓ **CRITERION D**
Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).

CRITERION E
Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).

CRITERION F
Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)

CRITERION G
Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).

CRITERION H
Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an Individual Heritage Place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-4)	No
INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

OTHER

N/A

REFERENCES

Contextual History references contained within *City of Melbourne Hoddle Grid Heritage Review: Postwar Thematic Environmental History 1945-1975*

Building Application Index (BAI), City of Melbourne.

Building Application Plans (BAP), City of Melbourne.

City of Melbourne Maps (CoMMaps), Site Details.

Reeves, Simon, 'Kenneth McDonald (1927-1996)', in Dictionary of Unsung Architects, accessed via <http://www.builtheritage.com.au/dua_mcdonald.html>, February 2020.

Sands & McDougall Directories (S&Mc).

The Age.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

**Central Activities District
Conservation Study 1985** Ungraded

**Central City Heritage
Review 1993** Ungraded

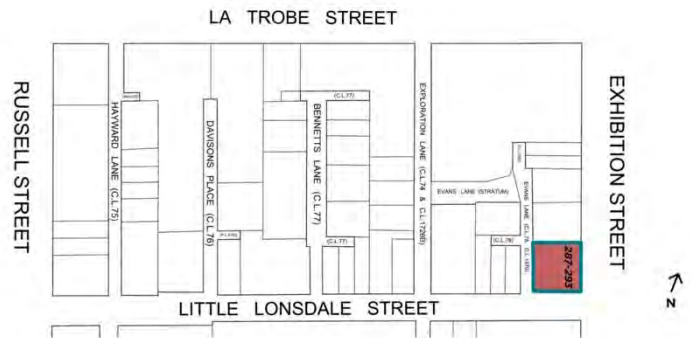
**Review of Heritage
Overlay Listings in the
CBD 2002** Ungraded

**Central City Heritage
Review 2011** Ungraded

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Former Exhibition Towers

PS ref no: HO1333XXXX



What is significant?

The Former Exhibition Towers at 287-293 Exhibition Street, a multi-storey residential building constructed in 1969-71.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing
- The building's high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations made to the building at street level are not significant.

How it is significant?

The Former Exhibition Towers at 287-293 Exhibition Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

Constructed in 1969-71 to a design by Kenneth McDonald & Associates, the Former Exhibition Towers has a clear association with the postwar building boom which transformed central Melbourne into a modern high-rise city. Architect designed multi-storey residential apartments were built in central Melbourne for a brief period from the late 1960s to the early 1970s and contributed to the high-rise character of the city (Criterion A).

The Former Exhibition Towers is a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist residential building. The building strongly reflects the style which was popular in the late 1960s and early 1970s, particularly in central Melbourne. Constructed as an 11-storey building, the Former Exhibition Towers clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a late 1960s/early 1970s structure, including a solid external appearance with brick curtain walls, horizontal strips of aluminium-framed windows, a prominent vertical row of projecting balconies and contrasting podium base. These demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style (Criterion D).

Primary source

[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\)](#)~~Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)~~ (updated March 2022)

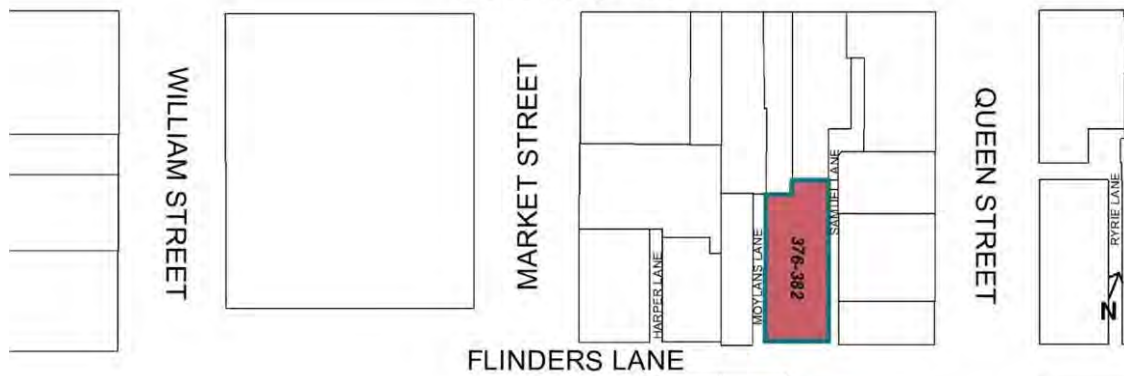
SITE NAME Former Batman Automatic Telephone Exchange

STREET ADDRESS 376-382 Flinders Lane, Melbourne

PROPERTY ID 103962



COLLINS STREET



SURVEY DATE: March 2019

SURVEY BY: Context

HERITAGE INVENTORY N/A

EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY No

PLACE TYPE Individual Heritage Place

PROPOSED CATEGORY Significant

FORMER GRADE Ungraded

DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST: Commonwealth Department of Works

BUILDER: McDougall & Ireland Pty Ltd

DEVELOPMENT PERIOD: Postwar Period (1945-1975)

DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION: 1957

THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
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POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style
2 Governing, administering and policing the city	2.1 Commonwealth government

LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Merchants
1920s	Offices
1960s	Telegraphic and telephonic

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Extent of overlay: Refer to map

SUMMARY

The former Batman Automatic Telephone Exchange at 376-382 Flinders Land was built in 1957 to a design by the Commonwealth Department of Works. The builders were McDougall & Ireland Pty Ltd. The eight-storey curtain wall and masonry building exhibits elements of the Post-War Modernist style, but also aspects of the earlier Inter-War Functionalist style. The building was one of several telephone exchanges commissioned by the Commonwealth in the postwar era, in response to the rapid expansion of telephone subscriptions and of the technical advancements in telephonic services in the mid to late twentieth century.

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

Commonwealth government

In 1948, the Commonwealth Government compulsorily acquired land on either side of Little Lonsdale Street, between Spring and Exhibition streets. The Commonwealth Centre (now demolished) was subsequently constructed on this block of land (with a street address of 11-39 La Trobe Street) over the period 1958 to the early 1960s. Its construction transformed 'the image of the Federal government in central Melbourne into that of a modern corporation' (Lewis et al 1993:223-24, 255).

As Commonwealth powers increased after World War II, Commonwealth buildings in city centres rose in number. Of particular influence was the transfer in 1942 of income tax revenue from the states to the Commonwealth and the resultant construction of buildings for the Taxation Office, including a building in Bourke Street, which opened in 1958. Marsden writes that the Commonwealth government presence, including the establishment after the war of the new Department of Housing and Construction, reinforced Melbourne's continuing pre-eminence as Australia's financial centre, at least until the 1960s.

A telephone exchange and postal hall building was constructed by the Commonwealth government at 114-120 Russell Street in the period 1948-54. In 1956 the building served as a relay station for the broadcasting of newly arrived television. In 1959, the Commonwealth Arbitration Courts opened at 450 Little Bourke Street, and in 1965 the Reserve Bank of Australia opened at 56-64 Collins Street. A telephone exchange was also constructed by the Commonwealth Department of Works at 376-382 Flinders Lane and opened in 1957.

SITE HISTORY

The subject site at 376-382 Flinders Lane, Melbourne, part of Crown Allotment 12 of Block 3, was first purchased by W Powell for £17 in 1837 (Badman & S&Mc 1892; DCLS 1839). The subject site had a street frontage to Little Flinders Street (now Flinders Lane). It abuts Moylans Lane on the west and Samuel Lane on the east.

In 1888 two buildings occupied the subject site, which was addressed 376, 380 and 382 Little Flinders Street in 1895 (Mahlstedt Map no 3, 1888; MMBW Detail Plan no 1010, 1895). F Watmuff, printer, and H Dove and Co, carpenters, were the occupants of 45-47 Little Flinders Street, which comprised a two-storey building fronting Little Flinders Street and three single-storey timber structures at the rear of the allotment, facing Moylans Lane. Samuel E and Co, merchants and importers, were the occupants of number 376, an elongated two-storey brick building that was built to the boundary line (Mahlstedt Map no 3, 1888). By 1910, the assemblage of structures at 378 Flinders Lane had been replaced with a three-storey brick building built to boundary line, numbered 378 Flinders Lane, and occupied by the Master Builders Association of Victoria (Mahlstedt Map section 1 no 18, 1910). In 1951 the Master Builders Association was evicted under police supervision to make way for the construction of the new Batman Telephone Exchange (*Mercury* 20 February 1951:2).

The Batman Automatic Telephone Exchange was built in 1956-57 for the Postmaster General's Department, to the design of the Commonwealth Department of Works (then known as Department of Works and Housing) (National Trust 2014:23). Planning for the building had begun at least ten years earlier, by 1946. A notice to erect the building was announced by the Minister for Works in 1946 (*Age* 12 April 1946:8). The Minister planned for the Batman Telephone Exchange to accommodate the administrative staff of the Postal Department and to replace the City West automatic exchange on Little Bourke Street, built 1937, which had reached its capacity for line allocations (*Age* 12 April

1946:8). The switchboard of the manual exchange on Lonsdale Street, opened 1911, had by this point become worn out and superseded by automatic switchboards (*Age* 12 April 1946:8). The Minister gave the estimated cost of the building as £175,550, and the equipment as £554,900 (*Age* 12 April 1946:8). Construction of the building was delayed by the inflated costs of building materials and labour at the end of World War Two.

Melbourne's postwar recovery incorporated a period of rapid population growth. This rise in population, in turn, led to an increased demand for telephone line subscriptions. A Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works issued a report relating to the proposed Batman Automatic Telephone Exchange at Flinders Lane, noting that while the expected cost of the works had risen dramatically from the initial quote of £175,550 to £441,000, there remained an urgent need for the proposed works to meet the growing demand for subscription lines. The Committee report found that a new exchange to service the western area of the City of Melbourne was necessary, as were the building of the Russell Street Exchange and Civic Exchange on Elizabeth Street, both constructed concurrent to the subject building (Commonwealth of Australia 1946).

In 1949 amendments were made to the original plans for the Batman Telephone Exchange, which included the elimination of a cantilevered section of the building to comply with local by-laws; the inclusion of a sub-basement; the strengthening of the structural frame and floors, and the subdivision of four upper floors (Commonwealth of Australia 1946).

McDougall & Ireland Pty Ltd were awarded the building contract for the exchange (*Herald* 12 June 1953:10). A tender was published in 1950 for the construction of a steel-framed and concrete building to be carried to the height limit of seven storeys plus basement (*Age* 27 May 1950:31). An article published in the *Herald* reported that the sub-basement of the Batman Exchange was reinforced with steel and heavy concrete, descending 17 feet at its deepest end, with foundations some further 30 feet down, enabling the sub-basement to provide safety for staff in the event of an atomic bomb (*Herald* 7 July 1949:5).

By 1953, the structural framework had been erected, and two passenger lifts and a goods lift had been installed (*Age* 4 March 1953:13). In 1954 construction was still underway, as evidenced by advertisements seeking carpenters for the exchange; the main switchboard was installed in the same year (see Figure 1) (*Age* 14 September 1954:16; *Age* 16 June 1954:13). The Batman Telephone Exchange opened in 1957 (see Figure 2). Designed by the Commonwealth Department of Works, the National Trust describe the building's design as 'almost *retardataire* in its [sic] amalgamation of a stark cream brick façade, evocative of pre-war government architecture, with a slightly projecting curtain-walled-bay' (National Trust 2014:22).



Figure 1. The subject building at 376-82 Flinders Lane under construction, c1950-1957. (Source: NAA 1917-1968, Series: B5515, Item no: 9815665)



Figure 2. The subject building at completion c1957. (Source: NAA 1957-1984, Series: B6295, Item no: 9723653)

Few alterations have been made to the subject building apart from a significant internal electrical upgrade in 1966' (*Age* 15 June 1966:36). Minor works included the provision of a sectional boiler and head tank in 1963 and alterations and additions were made to the internal partitions in 1979 (*Age* 14 December 1963:67; *Age* 17 November 1979:116).

By the late 1960s, satellite and microwave technologies had integrated Melbourne's telephones into a global communications system (Healy 2008) and in 1987, Telecom (created in 1975 following the abolition of the Postmasters General Department) announced that it would open a Mobilenet cellular mobile telephone service, with the Lonsdale Telephone Exchange one of twelve base stations in Victoria to which Mobilenet users could subscribe (*Age* 25 May 1987:35).

It is believed that ownership of the subject building was transferred from the Commonwealth government to Telecom (later Telstra Corporation) in 1986.

The Telstra Corporation presently occupies the whole of the building.

Commonwealth Department of Works, designer

The Commonwealth Department of Works was established in 1901 to manage the creation of public works in the newly federated nation. Although the agency has operated under different titles in its history – it was known as the Department of Works from 1952 to 1973 – it is commonly referred to as the Commonwealth Department of Works (CDW) to distinguish it from state-based agencies. The Department was responsible for the design, construction, alteration and maintenance of Commonwealth buildings and other engineering works. Its offices were located in Melbourne until 1929, when they were transferred to Canberra. A period of intensive works were carried out by the CDW during and immediately after World War Two, as the Department managed the building of essential infrastructure as well as significant postwar planning (Smith 2006). By the early 1970s, the activities of the CDW were slowly declining; its functions were transferred to the Department of Housing and Construction in 1978, then the Department of Transport and Construction in 1982 and

from 1987, it was known as Australian Construction Services. The vestiges of the CDW were sold off to an engineering firm in 1997 (Willis 2012).

SITE DESCRIPTION

The former Batman Automatic Telephone Exchange at 376-382 Flinders Lane is an eight-storey commercial curtain wall and masonry building. It was constructed in 1956-57, but planning for the building had begun at least ten years earlier, by 1946. The building exhibits elements of the Post-War Modernist style, but also aspects of the earlier interwar Functionalist style. Located on the northern side of Flinders Lane, the building is abutted by Moylans Lane on the west and Samuel Lane on the east.

The principal façade to Flinders Lane exhibits an unusual asymmetrical combination of a solid modernist form of light-coloured face brick, with an offset projecting curtain wall which extends from the first to the fifth floors. The curtain wall abuts a projecting vertical fin wall at its western end but is inset from the corner of the building at its eastern end. The curtain wall is framed in aluminum, with vertically alternating clear glazed and opaque panels to provide a lightweight grid across the façade. The height of glazed and opaque panels at each level varies, and there are three rows of clear glazed panels to each opaque row at the second and third levels, whereas the first, fourth and fifth floors have two rows of clear panels. Two large ventilation shafts are inserted into the curtain wall at the eastern end, each occupying the equivalent of two vertical modules. All of the windows are fixed, suggesting that the building was constructed with air conditioning systems.

There are two additional levels within the face brick component above the projecting curtain wall module, and each level is punctuated by six equally spaced vertically proportioned window openings, each of which has a projecting perimeter concrete frame. The original double hung timber frame windows are extant at the seventh floor level, but have been replaced by fixed single pane aluminum frame windows at the sixth floor level. A vertical element with a flagpole extends one level higher than the main roof level on the easternmost corner of the building. There are narrow projecting eaves at the top of both the curtain wall and at the main roof level. The internal building structure is of reinforced concrete post and slab.

The southern section of the eastern (Samuel Lane) façade is face brick near the front corner and off-form concrete masonry at the rear. Within the face brick section there is a continuous vertical window providing daylight into the stairwell. The western (Moylans Lane) façade is also off-form concrete, punctuated by a regular pattern of steel frame windows.

At the street level the building is clad with large (possibly original), vertically proportioned tiles. There are no windows to the Flinders Lane façade at ground level, but the building entrance is located on the eastern side and is recessed with the wall curving outward to the principal façade. Three concrete steps lead to the front door, which features a large glazed transom above a modern door.

INTEGRITY

The former Batman Automatic Telephone Exchange at 376-382 Flinders Lane is highly intact in terms of its original built form and configuration, with very few obvious external alterations or additions to the original fabric, other than replacement of the front door and windows on the sixth level. The original non-loadbearing aluminium curtain wall with its alternating clear glazed and opaque panels is extant,

as is the solid modernist form of light-coloured face brick with its window openings and projecting perimeter concrete frames. Overall, the building is of very high integrity.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

After World War Two ended, building activities in the central city revived slowly. The 1950s saw the development of the modern multi-story office building in Melbourne, often built for insurance or finance companies, or for professional offices. Reinforced concrete frames provided the structural systems, allowing the façade to be clad in non-load bearing curtain walls. The Post-War Modernist style became popular, becoming the preferred option for commercial buildings being constructed in central Melbourne during the late 1950s and beyond. Characteristics of the Post-War Modernist style include a cubiform overall shape, plain smooth wall surfaces, contrasting texture and expressed structural frames.

Curtain wall designs were used in a number of corporate buildings built in the 1950s. Early examples were the Norwich Union Insurance offices at 53-57 Queen Street (Yuncken, Freeman Brothers, Griffiths & Simpson), which incorporated panels of opaque black glass, and the new Allan's Music Store building in Collins Street (Godfrey Spowers, Hughes, Mewton & Lobb), with metal panels in a bright gloss red. In early examples, curtain walls were typically fully glazed, while in later examples, a greater range of materials were used to achieve variety of expression. A group of buildings built predominantly in the 1950s combined expansive glazed panels with solid masonry sections to achieve a distinctive aesthetic. They represent a particular stage in the development of this new building type.

There are a number of buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the former Batman Automatic Telephone Exchange. These are detailed below.

State-significant places

A comparative example in the City of Melbourne which is located immediately adjacent to the Hoddle Grid is ICI House, 1-4 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1958). This place is included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR H0786).

Locally-significant places

Precinct Heritage Overlay

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from the early postwar period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme. Those from the 1950s that are included in the Heritage Overlay are currently included as part of Heritage Precincts, but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places. These places are:



Former Gilbert Court, 100-104 Collins Street (John A La Gerche, 1954-55) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Hosie's Hotel, 1-5 Elizabeth Street & 288-290 Flinders Street (Mussen McKay & Potter, 1954-55), included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct as a Significant place.



Coates Building, 18-22 Collins Street (John A La Gerche, 1958-59) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Bank of Adelaide Building, 265-269 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton & Lobb, 1959-60) included in HO502 The Block Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Allans Building, 276-278 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton & Lobb, 1956-57) included in HO502 The Block Precinct as a Contributory place.

Other Examples

Despite the demolition of many 1950s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the initial period of curtain wall construction in Melbourne and demonstrate similar characteristics to the subject building. The following examples are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places as part of the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review:



Lauren's House, 414-416 Lonsdale Street (Harold Bloom, 1956) (Interim HO1254).



Former Atlas Assurance Building, 404-406 Collins Street (H Garnet Alsop & Partners, 1958-61) (Interim HO1008).



Former London Assurance House, 468-470 Bourke Street (B Evans & Partners, 1960) (Interim HO1006).



Former AMP Building, 402-408 Lonsdale Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1956-59).



Former Ajax House, 103-105 Queen Street (HD Berry, 1956).



HC Sleigh Building, 166-172 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1953-55).



Coles & Garrard Building, 376-378 Bourke Street (Meldrum & Noad, 1957).



Canton Insurance Building, 43-51 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1957).



Former Batman Automatic Telephone Exchange,
376 Flinders Lane (Commonwealth Department of
Works, 1957).

Analysis

In its use of a non-loadbearing curtain wall façade system, the former Batman Automatic Telephone Exchange at 376-382 Flinders Lane is comparable to a number of other central Melbourne buildings included – or recommended for inclusion – in the HO. The subject building is particularly comparable with Laurens House, as both are examples of early 1950s commercial buildings that utilise a major curtain wall component in conjunction with a solid masonry form, rather than the curtain wall being the sole façade element.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓ **CRITERION A**
Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).

CRITERION B
Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).

CRITERION C
Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).

✓ **CRITERION D**
Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).

✓ **CRITERION E**
Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).

CRITERION F
Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)

CRITERION G
Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).

CRITERION H
Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-3)	No
TO BE INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

OTHER

N/A

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PREVIOUS STUDIES

**Central Activities District
Conservation Study 1985** Ungraded

**Central City Heritage
Review 1993** Ungraded

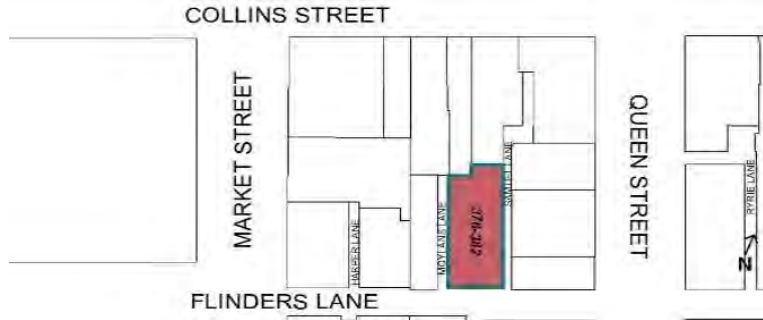
**Review of Heritage
overlay listings in the
CBD 2002** Ungraded

**Central City Heritage
Review 2011** Ungraded

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Former [Batman](#)
Automatic Telephone Exchange

PS ref no: HO~~1335XXXX~~





What is significant?

The former Batman Automatic Telephone Exchange, 376-37882 Flinders Lane, Melbourne, built by the Commonwealth Department of Works in 1957, ~~is significant.~~

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- ~~e~~Original building form and scale;
- ~~e~~Original asymmetrical composition of solid light-coloured face brick form and nonloadbearing curtain wall to its principal (Flinders Lane) façade;
- ~~v~~Vertically proportioned window openings with projecting perimeter frames; ~~and;~~
- ~~O~~original street level façade clad in tiles and recessed entry door opening with toplight.

Later alterations are not significant.

How it is significant?

The former Batman Automatic Telephone Exchange at 376-37832 Flinders Lane is of local historic, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

The former Batman Automatic Telephone Exchange, opened in 1957 at 376-382 Flinders Lane, is historically significant for the material evidence it provides of the broadening of Commonwealth government powers after World War Two, a shift that resulted in increased construction of Commonwealth buildings in city centres by the Commonwealth Department of Works. As a large-scale purpose-built building it demonstrates the growth and changes in telecommunication technology in the period following World War Two. (Criterion A)

The former Batman Automatic Telephone Exchange, is significant as a highly intact example of postwar multi-storey development in central Melbourne, utilising the Post-War Modernist style that characterised this new wave of development. These buildings represented the new modernism in their modular, industrial Bauhaus-inspired aesthetic incorporating features such as consistent access to daylight and open floor plans to meet new standards for commercial office accommodation. The presence of stylistic features characteristic of the interwar Functionalist style demonstrates the building's lengthy planning and design phase as a result of delays to construction that were typical of early postwar construction. (Criterion D)

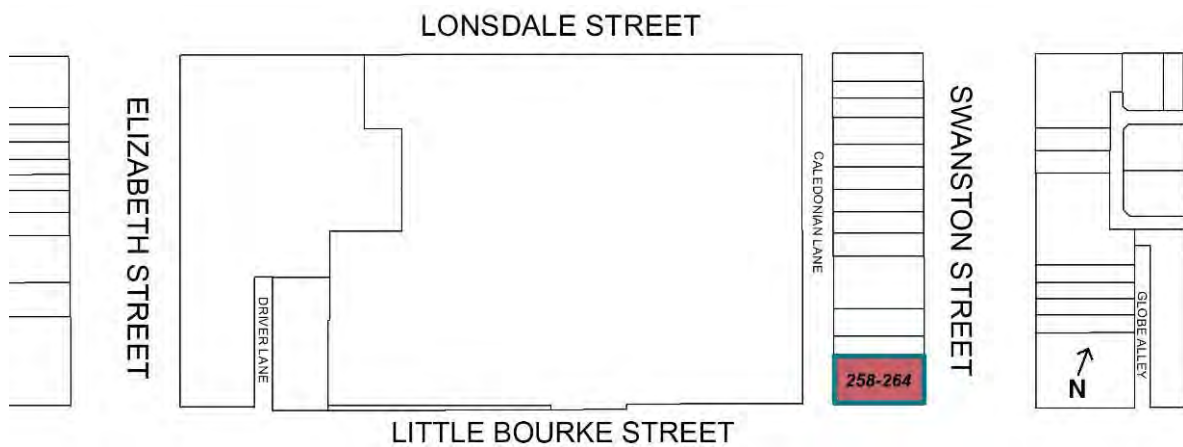
The building is also representative of the modern purpose-built telephone exchange buildings, designed by the Commonwealth Department of Works in the early postwar period to accommodate growth in telecommunications as well as accommodating an expanded workforce. The internal technical requirements of these telephone exchange buildings are evident in the variations between high floor to ceiling heights across different levels. (Criterion D)

The former Batman Automatic Telephone Exchange is aesthetically significant as a substantial, refined and highly intact example of a lightweight aluminium curtain wall Post-War Modernist style multi-storey building. The principal façade to Flinders Lane exhibits an unusual asymmetrical combination of a solid modernist form of light-coloured face brick, with an offset projecting curtain wall which extends from the first to the fifth floors. The building also demonstrates characteristics of the interwar Functionalist style, including the use of light-coloured face brick punctuated by vertically proportioned window openings with projecting perimeter frames. Overall, it is a well-executed design by the Commonwealth Department of Works, who were responsible for many high quality public buildings during the interwar and early postwar periods. (Criterion E)

Primary source

[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\)](#)~~Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)~~ [Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\) \(updated March 2022\)](#)

SITE NAME	Former State Savings Bank
STREET ADDRESS	258-264 Little Bourke Street, Melbourne
PROPERTY ID	109289



SURVEY DATE: October 2018

SURVEY BY: Context

HERITAGE INVENTORY No

EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY No

PLACE TYPE Individual Heritage Place

PROPOSED CATEGORY Significant

DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST: Meldrum and Partners

FORMER GRADE C
BUILDER: Not known

DEVELOPMENT PERIOD: Postwar Period (1945-1975)

DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION: 1961

THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations.	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style 1.9 Beyond the curtain wall
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Business and finance

LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Hotels and Lodgings
1920s	Hotels and Lodgings
1960s	Offices

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Extent of overlay: Refer to map

SUMMARY

The former State Savings Bank of Victoria building at 258-264 Little Bourke Street is a 12 storey commercial curtain wall corner building built in the Post-War Modernist style, with subtle 'featurist' elements. It was constructed in 1961 to a design by architects Meldrum & Partners and Robert Cousland.

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

Beyond the curtain wall

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding, screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

Business and finance in the postwar period

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17).

Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

SITE HISTORY

The site on which the current building stands was previously occupied by a hotel and shops (S&Mc 1915; 1960). The hotel was named the Castlemaine Club Hotel in 1895, however by 1914 it was known as the Swanston Family Hotel with Thomas Finlayson as its proprietor (MMBW Detail Plan 1015, 1895; S&Mc 1914).

The State Savings Bank of Victoria building at 258-264 Little Bourke Street was built to a design by architects Meldrum & Partners and Robert Cousland, bank architect (see Figure 1 and Figure 2). Offering 'long contracts', tenders were advertised in October 1960 for tradesmen to work on the site (*Age* 6 October 1960: 21).

The origins of the State Savings Bank of Victoria can be traced back to 1842 when it was founded in Melbourne as the Port Phillip Savings Bank under New South Wales' legislation. Branches of the Bank were subsequently established in other parts of the colony. Owned by the State of Victoria from 1852, from 1853 each bank branch was made a separate and independent institution with its own trustees and officers.

Between 1896 and 1912 the independent Savings Banks of Victoria merged to become a single institution, formalised by legislation in 1912. By 1929 deposits with the Bank accounted for almost two thirds of deposits across all banks in Victoria (Merrett 2008; Trove 2009).

The bank took a keen interest in social welfare and contributed to the construction of housing. In the 1920s the State Savings Bank created a housing estate in Port Melbourne, one of a number of initiatives to encourage home ownership in the early to mid-twentieth century. After World War Two the Bank began lending on overdraft to the co-operative housing societies. By June 1954 some 51 societies had received overdraft facilities from the State Savings Bank, amounting to £15.7 million. (Merrett 2008) The State Savings Bank was sold to the Commonwealth Bank in 1990 (Trove 2009).

As commemorated on an original plaque on the building, the State Savings Bank of Victoria building opened on 27 April 1961. Sands and McDougall directories show that by 1965 the building was occupied by the State Savings Bank, as well as other company offices, including printers, manufacturers and importers, indicating that much of the building had been purposely set aside to be let out to tenants (S&Mc 1965).

Following construction, only internal alterations were made to the building, with partitions added to multiple floors in 1969 and 1981 (MBAI 40804; 5266). On the first floor, offices were altered in 1982 and new doors were installed in 1990 (MBAI 71178). The State Savings Bank of Victoria remained occupants of the subject building until 1990 when the bank was taken over by the Commonwealth Bank (Merrett 2008; Trove 2009). In 2002, the building was subdivided into 12 units, and currently contains 29 businesses, four shops and three food outlets (CoMMaps).



Figure 1. State Bank building, corner Little Bourke and Swanston streets under construction, 28 October 1960. (Source: Commercial Photographic Co 1960, SLV)



Figure 2: State Bank Building c 1985 (Source: City of Melbourne Building Identification Sheet, 1985)

Meldrum & Partners, architects

Percy Hayman Meldrum studied at Ballarat College and was articled to A A Fritsch from 1907 to 1913. Moving to London in 1914, Meldrum practiced as an aircraft designer at the War Office and established an atelier in Wells Street, London, which became a gathering place for Australian architects engaged in war service. At the end of World War One Meldrum joined the staff of the Architectural Association, where he taught A G Stephenson and Donald Turner. In 1921, he returned to Australia to join A G Stephenson as Stephenson & Meldrum. Practising as principal designer, he strongly encouraged the inclusion of murals and sculpture in the firm's projects. His work during this time included Newspaper House, at 247-249 Collins Street (1932) and Castlemaine Art Gallery and Historic Museum (1930).

Stephenson & Meldrum were also involved in the extension of the former State Savings Bank of Victoria building constructed at the corner of Bourke and Elizabeth streets (demolished c1970). Built in 1912 to designs by architects Grainger & Little, Stephenson & Meldrum designed the 1925 two-storey additions and the 1934 extensions that took the building up to the Elizabeth Street corner (Walking Melbourne).

Meldrum practiced as Meldrum & Noad between 1937 and the 1950s, during which time he won the 1942 RVIA Street Architecture Medal for the National Bank of Australasia building in Collins Street (now known as 77-89 William Street) (1938) (Willis 2012: 450).

Meldrum was joined in practice by his son, Richard John Meldrum (1928-2004), who gained a bachelor's degree in architecture from the University of Melbourne in 1951. The architectural practice

Meldrum & Partners was formed in 1959 and became Meldrum Burrows when Sydney-based Bill Burrows later joined the firm. (Willis 2012:450).

Meldrum Snr retired from practice in 1965. Meldrum Burrows gained particular prominence in the 1970s and 1980s and were involved in advising on strategic planning for large projects, including the Australian Embassy at Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (1989) in collaboration with Daryl Jackson, and Philip Cox's Parliament House, Darwin (Willis 2012: 450).

SITE DESCRIPTION

The former State Savings Bank of Victoria building at 258-264 Little Bourke Street is a 12 storey commercial curtain wall corner building in the Post-War Modernist style, with subtle 'featurist' elements, constructed in 1961. It exhibits a prominent Bauhaus grid design aesthetic across the principal street façade (Little Bourke Street) with largely unadorned and solid end walls clad with polished stone panels on the secondary street frontages (Swanston Street and Caledonian Lane). The subject site is bound by Swanston Street to the east, Little Bourke Street to the south, Caledonian Lane to the west and a low-rise retail building to the north.

The façade to Little Bourke Street comprises an aluminium framed nonloadbearing curtain wall, with alternating vertically glazed and solid panels providing a lightweight grid across the façade. Every second glazed panel is fitted with an openable sash as the building predates the use of air conditioning. Adjacent to the entry is an original plaque commemorating the building's opening in 1961.

The frame is of natural aluminium finish and the solid panels are red in colour, aligned at the level of the floors. The other three facades are solid masonry, finished with stone-panel cladding punctured by the repetitive chequerboard sequence of square window openings. Underneath the cladding is probably off-form concrete, based on the image of the building under construction. The facades have small windows at each level, which are generally square except for the western elevation where the windows are elongated horizontally. The eastern façade to Swanston Street is clad with brown granite with square window openings. The northern façade of the building can be seen above the low-rise neighboring buildings and features four centrally placed openable square windows at each level and a stylised clockface at its eastern end. The building has no formal termination or parapet at the top level, as is typical of the style.

The original main concrete peripheral columns are expressed at ground level, although the retail and office foyer shopfront system has been replaced over time. The Swanston Street frontage features 'TV display' windows at first floor level, and has a suspended box awning over the ground floor entry lobby, which is an addition since 2010.

INTEGRITY

Overall the building is largely intact with very few changes visible to original or early fabric. The building retains its original nonloadbearing aluminium curtain wall with its alternating vertically glazed and solid panels. At street level the retail and office foyer shopfronts have been altered, and an awning added to the Swanston Street entrance. Overall, the building has very high integrity.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The 1950s saw the development of the modern multi-story office building in Melbourne, often built for insurance or finance companies, or for professional offices. Reinforced concrete frames provided the structural systems, allowing the façade to be clad in a non-load bearing curtain wall. In early examples, curtain walls were typically fully glazed, while in later examples, a greater range of materials were used to achieve variety of expression.

There are a number of buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the former State Savings Bank. These are detailed below.

State-significant places

A small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne have been assessed as being of State-level significance and are included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). These include:

- Total House, 170-90 Russell Street (Bogle & Banfield 1964-65; VHR H2329 & HO1095)
- Former Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-44 Bourke Street (Peter Muller 1966-69)
- Victorian Government Offices, Treasury Reserve Precinct (Yuncken Freeman 1967-68 – outside the Hoddle Grid)
- Eagle House, 473 Bourke Street (Yuncken Freeman 1971-72; VHR H1807 & HO901)
- BHP House, 130-148 William Street (Yuncken Freeman 1969-72; VHR H1699 & HO767).

Locally-significant places

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from this period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme on a permanent basis. Those that are, are generally currently included within Heritage Precincts but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places, as follows:

Precinct Heritage Overlay



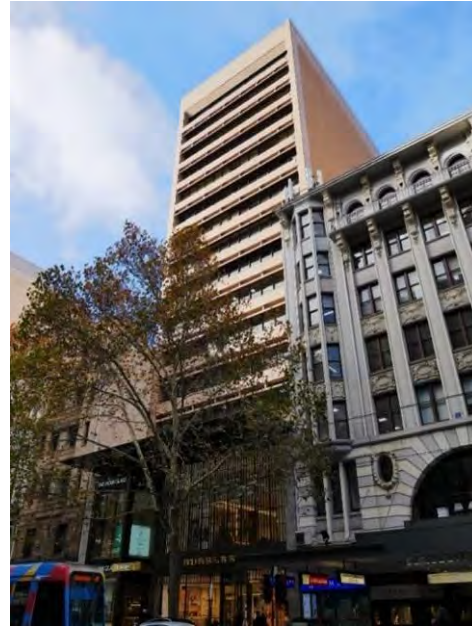
Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street, (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1974) included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct (Non-contributory).



Wales Corner, 221-231 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1964-66) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Swanston Street) Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, 251-257 Collins Street, (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 19741-73 included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Flinders Lane) (Non-contributory).

One individual heritage place recently included in a site-specific Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis is the Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1966) (HO1213):



Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

Other examples

Despite the demolition of many 1960s and 1970s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the advancement of

construction techniques from the 1960s through to the mid 1970s and demonstrate the broad range of design approaches of the period. The podiums of the majority of these places have been modified at street level. Examples include:



Former RACV Club, 111-129 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961) (Interim HO1068)



Former Australia Pacific House, 136-144 Exhibition Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1975-78)



Royal Insurance Group Building, 430-442 Collins Street, (Yuncken Freeman, 1965) (Interim HO1010)



Office Building, 516-520 Collins Street (architect unknown, c1974)



Former Guardian Building, 454-456 Collins Street
(Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1960-61)



Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building,
155-161 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon,
1961-62)



Office Building, 178-188 William Street (McIntyre
McIntyre & Partners, 1972-73)



MLA Building, 308-336 Collins Street (Stephenson &
Turner, 1963)



Royal Mail House, 255-267 Bourke Street (D
Graeme Lumsden, 1963)



Former Sleigh Corner Building, 158-164 Queen Street
(Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1964)



The Former Houston Building, 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kolle & Associates, 1965)



AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street (Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1965-69)



Former Dalgety House, 457-471 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp & Walker, 1966-68)



Former State Saving Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1967-68)



Former Legal & General House, 375-383 Collins Street (B Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking, 1967)



Former AMP Building, 344-350 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1966-68)



Equitable House, 335-349 Little Collins Street (unknown architect, 1968)



Former Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street (Meldrum & Partners with Peddle Thorp Walker, 1968-70)



Former Methodist Church Centre, 130-134 Little Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1966-67)



Cowan House, 457-469 Little Collins Street (E & G Kolle, 1969)



Lonsdale Exchange, 447-553 Lonsdale Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1969)



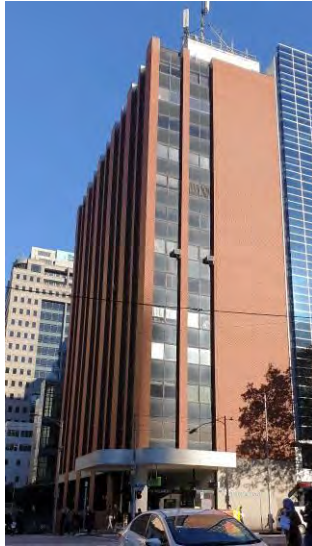
Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



Former Bryson Centre, 174-192 Exhibition Street
(Perrot Lyon Timlock & Kesa, 1970-72)



Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building,
359-373 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon,
c1972-75)



Nubrick House, 269-275 William Street (Buchan
Laird & Buchan, 1972)



Former Law Department Building, 221-231 Queen Street
(Fischer Group, 1972)



Former National Bank of Australasia Stock
Exchange Branch, 85-91 Queen Street (Meldrum &
Partners, 1973)



Former MLC Building, 303-317 Collins Street (Demaine,
Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, c1970-1973)



Office Building, 589-603 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp de Preu, 1973-75)

Analysis

The former State Savings Bank of Victoria building at 258-264 Little Bourke Street is comparable to a number of other central Melbourne buildings either included in or proposed for inclusion in the HO. The buildings are of a similar scale, although some examples are mid-block, situated between other buildings, whereas 258-264 Little Bourke Street has frontages to three streets and demonstrates the use of masonry (probably off-form concrete) sheer walls to provide the three-dimensional frame for the curtain wall elevation. The Little Bourke Street façade demonstrates the prominent Bauhaus grid design aesthetic of the Post-War Modernist style, based on repetitive horizontal and vertical modules made possible by the use of a lightweight aluminium curtain wall system which maximises access to daylight. Like the examples noted above, the former State Savings Bank demonstrates the vertical grid pattern that is characteristic of the style with vertically alternating clear glass and opaque panels. The building retains a high level of integrity above the ground floor, comparing favourably with other examples of the style in central Melbourne.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓ **CRITERION A**
Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).

CRITERION B
Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).

CRITERION C
Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).

✓ **CRITERION D**
Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).

✓ **CRITERION E**
Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).

CRITERION F
Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)

CRITERION G
Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).

CRITERION H
Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-3)	No
TO BE INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

OTHER

N/A

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PREVIOUS STUDIES

**Central Activities District
Conservation Study 1985** D
(listed as 231-235 Swanston Street)

**Central City Heritage
Review 1993** C
(listed as 231-235 Swanston Street)

**Review of Heritage
overlay listings in the
CBD 2002** Ungraded

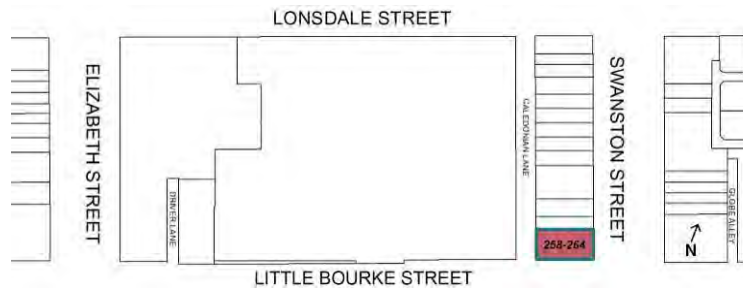
**Central City Heritage
Review 2011** Ungraded

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Former State Savings Bank



PS ref no: HO [1344XXXX](#)





What is significant?

The former State Savings Bank at 258-264 Little Bourke Street, completed in 1961 to a design by Meldrum & Partners and Robert Cousland, ~~is significant.~~

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- ~~e~~Original building form and scale;
- ~~e~~Original non-loadbearing curtain wall;
- Original masonry side and rear walls and windows; ~~and~~
- Original commemorative plaque and clock (northern elevation).

Later alterations, particularly at street level, are not significant.

How it is significant?

The former State Savings Bank at 258-264 Little Bourke Street is of historical, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

The former State Savings Bank, completed in 1961, is historically significant for the evidence it provides of Melbourne city's postwar development and rapid growth. The modernist architecture of the postwar period played a role in the formulation of company identities, as expressions of ambition and relevance, at a time when companies opted for construction and also naming rights of new city office buildings as a form of promotion. Built for the State Savings Bank of Victoria, the building at 258-264 Little Bourke Street is historically significant as a reflection of the growth and progress of locally established banks during the 1950s-60s, that resulted in architecturally designed company-named buildings being erected. (Criterion A)

The former State Savings Bank is significant as a highly intact example of postwar commercial development in central Melbourne, utilising the Post-War Modernist style that characterised this new wave of development. These buildings represented the new modernism in their modular, industrial Bauhaus inspired aesthetic incorporating features such as consistent access to daylight and open floor

plans to meet new standards for commercial office accommodation. The former State Savings Bank demonstrates the key characteristics of the style. (Criterion D)

Designed by architects Meldrum & Partners and Robert Cousland, the building is aesthetically significant as a substantial Post-War Modernist style commercial building. It exhibits the prominent Bauhaus grid design aesthetic of the style with its lightweight aluminium framed, fine-graded modular curtain wall across the principal street façade (Little Bourke Street), with alternating clear glazed and coloured opaque glass spandrel panels superimposing a refined grid over the building. (Criterion E)

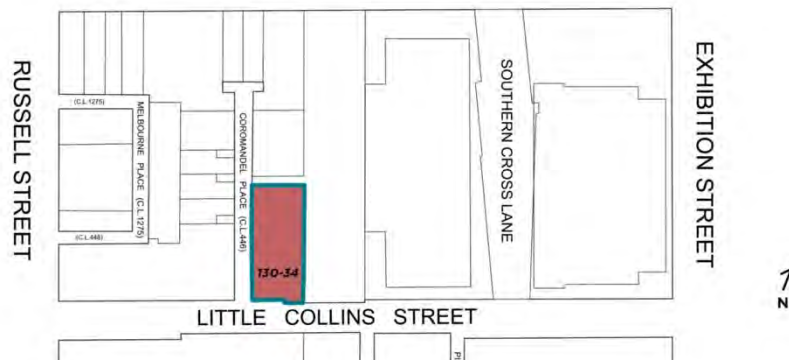
Primary source

[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\)](#)~~Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)~~ [Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\) \(updated March 2022\)](#)

SITE NAME	Former Methodist Church Centre [also known as Uniting Church Centre] (Now demolished)
STREET ADDRESS	130-134 Little Collins Street, Melbourne
PROPERTY ID	106052



BOURKE STREET



SURVEY DATE: October 2019

SURVEY BY: GJM Heritage

HERITAGE INVENTORY No

EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY No

PLACE TYPE Individual Heritage Place

PROPOSED CATEGORY Significant

FORMER GRADE Ungraded

DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST: Bates Smart & McCutcheon with F C Armstrong

BUILDER: Not known

DEVELOPMENT PERIOD: Postwar Period (1945-1975)

DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION: 1966-1967

THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation focused on the postwar history of the site and did not address associations with Aboriginal people or organisations	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style 1.9 Beyond the curtain wall
4 Creating a functioning city	4.3 Providing health and welfare services

LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Hotel, Retail
1920s	Office, Hairdresser, Retail
1960s	Retail/Workshop, Office, Community

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Extent of overlay: To extent of property boundary

SUMMARY

The Former Methodist Church Centre at 130-134 Little Collins Street was designed by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, in association with architect F C Armstrong, as the administrative centre for the Methodist Church. The building was constructed in 1966-1967.

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

Beyond the curtain wall

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding, screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

Providing health and welfare services

Health, welfare and education services were historically established in Melbourne's city centre. The Stella Maris Seafarer's Centre at 588-600 Little Collins Street (1972-73) was one of many charities

established as part of the Catholic Church's official missionary work to provide pastoral care, services and support for seafarers.

The Pharmaceutical Guild, established in Victoria in 1928 to ensure the quality of medicines and to establish a uniform scale of wages for pharmaceutical assistants, constructed a building at 18-22 Francis Street in 1954 to a design by Cowper, Murphy and Appleford. Optometrists, Coles and Garrard, established an office building and consulting rooms at 376 Bourke Street in 1957 to a design by architects Meldrum and Noad.

The Queen Victoria Hospital, established in La Trobe Street in 1896 as the first women's hospital in Victoria, moved to 210 Lonsdale Street in 1946. Its primary aim was to be a hospital 'For Women, By Women'. By 1965 it became the new Monash University's teaching hospital for gynaecology, obstetrics and paediatrics and changed from treating solely female patients to being a 'family hospital'. Renamed the Queen Victoria Medical Centre in 1977, it relocated to the Monash Medical Centre at Clayton in 1989 (Russell 2008).

SITE HISTORY

The Former Methodist Church Centre at 130-134 Little Collins Street was designed by Bates Smart & McCutcheon in association with architect F C Armstrong (BAP). The City of Melbourne received a building permit application for the Methodist Church Centre in May 1966 (with an estimated total cost of \$944,000) (BAI), and the building was constructed in 1966-1967.

An article published in *The Age* in October 1965 discussed the building, which was proposed to serve as the administrative centre for the Methodist Church of Victoria and to house all the activities for the group (Figure 1). Construction was to begin in March 1966, with completion expected by April 1967. The article reported that the:

...ground floor, with an attractive modern foyer well set back, will consist of a large all-purpose auditorium and servery ... On the first floor will be another hall to seat 200, with a servery, large lounge, library and quiet room and a small chapel for special purposes. (Age, 15 Oct 1965:16)

The other floors provided office spaces for the church, while a rooftop garden, refreshment room and caretaker's flat was proposed for the roof (Age, 15 Oct 1965:16).

The architectural drawings, dated October and November 1965 (Figure 2 - Figure 4), indicate that the building was designed with double-hung, aluminium-framed windows. Columns to the southern entrance were faced with black granite while the entrance steps comprised bluestone steps and marble risers. The ground floor comprised a large meeting hall with a dias at the north end (BAP).

Photos of the completed building, dated 1968, show the interior spaces and rooftop garden (Figure 5 - Figure 6). In 1977, the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Union denominations combined to form the Uniting Church. The building served as the Uniting Church Centre until mid-2019 when it was sold to a hotel developer (Financial Review; CoMMaps).

Bates Smart & McCutcheon, architects

Bates, Smart & McCutcheon was formed when Osborn McCutcheon joined the existing firm of Bates & Smart in 1926. Bates & Smart had itself been born out of previous iterations of a firm that could be traced back to Reed & Barnes, making it one of the oldest practices in the country (Goat 2012:72).

By the 1960s the firm had become one of Australia's largest architectural firms. It exists today as Bates Smart (Goad 2012:72).

During the 1930s, Bates, Smart & McCutcheon had earned a reputation for designing Georgian-style residences, but also went on to win RVIA awards for their work on the AMP Building in Collins Street (1926-31), Buckley & Nunn Building in Bourke Street (now David Jones, 1933), and the Second Church of Christ Scientist in Camberwell (1936-37).

By the 1950s, Bates, Smart & McCutcheon had become Australia's 'expert' in high-rise office buildings design (Goad 2012:73). Much of their work at this time was large structures with glass curtain walls. In Melbourne this was exemplified by ICI House, which broke the city's existing 132-foot (40m) height limit in 1955-8 (Goad 2012:73). Other work completed by the firm in the 1950s included the first of the Sleigh Buildings at 158-172 Queen Street Melbourne (1953-55 & 1964), Union House at 43-51 Queen Street Melbourne (1957) and the AMP Building at 402-408 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne (1956-58).

Bates, Smart & McCutcheon continued to expand into the 1960s and 70s, with its design approach shifting from glazed curtain walls to facades of artificial stone or prefabricated concrete panels. Works in Melbourne during this period included AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, Bourke Street (1965-69) in association with US firm, Skidmore Owings and Merrill; the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61); the South British Insurance Company Ltd Building at 155-161 Queen Street (1961-62) and the Methodist Church Centre at 130-134 Little Collins Street (1966-67) with F C Armstrong.

In the 1970s the firm designed the Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street, Melbourne (c1972-75); the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73) and the double tower and plaza complex of Collins Place, Collins Street (1970-80), undertaken in collaboration with international architecture practice, I M Pei. Other notable works by the firm include the large collaborative designs of Melbourne Central with Kisho Kurokawa (1983-92) and Federation Square with Lab Architecture Studio (1997-2002) (Goad 2012:74).

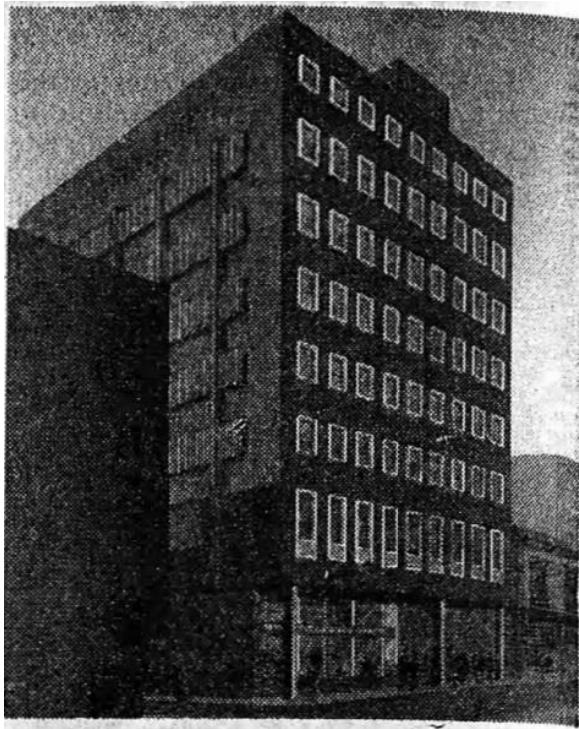


Figure 1. Sketch of the proposed new Methodist Church Centre, designed by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, in association with F C Armstrong. Sketch published in *The Age* in October 1965 (5 Oct 1965:16).

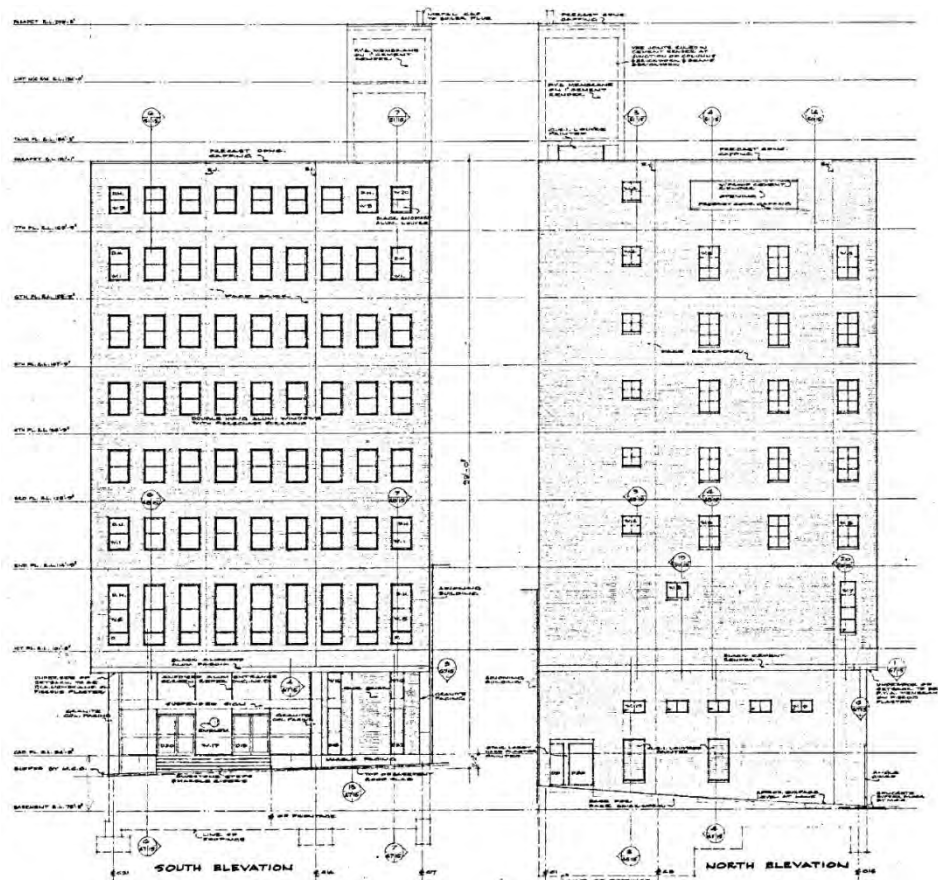


Figure 2. South (left) and north (right) elevations. Drawings by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, in association with F C Armstrong, dated November 1965 (BAP).

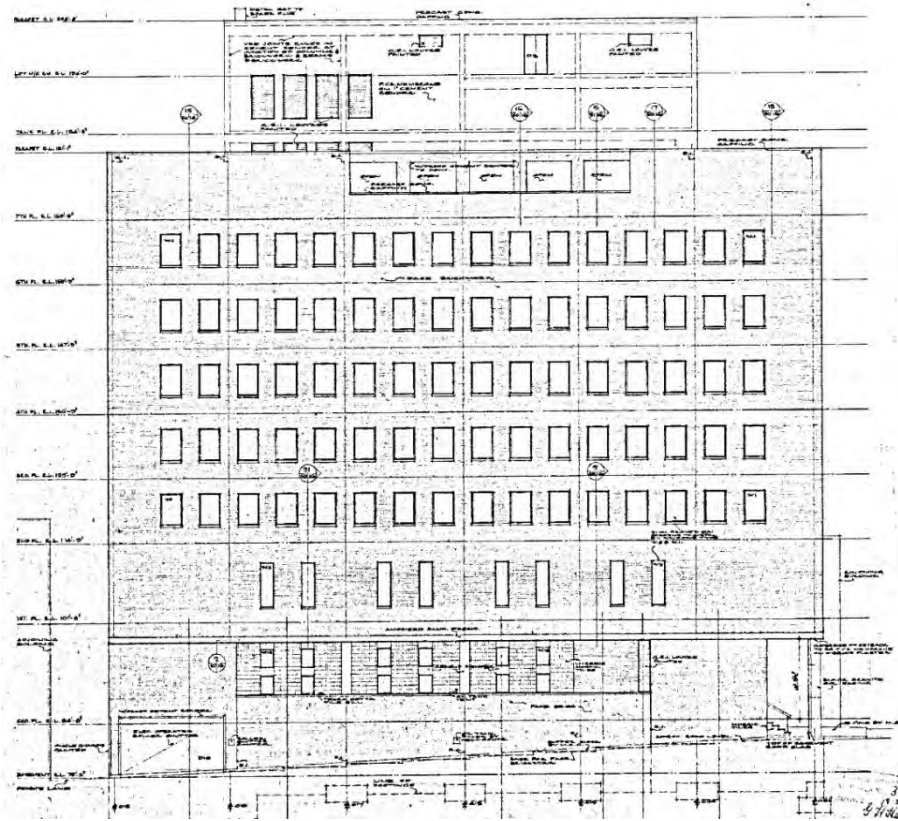


Figure 3. West elevation, to Coromandel Place. Drawings by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, in association with F C Armstrong, dated November 1965 (BAP).

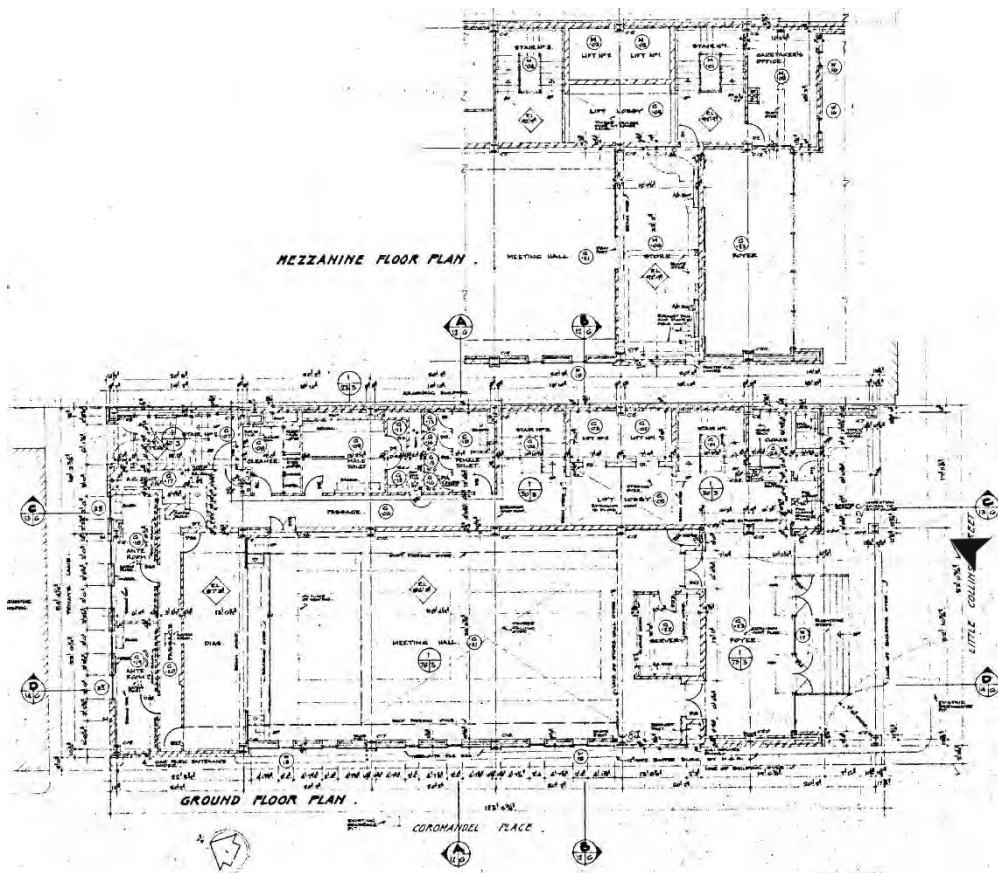


Figure 4. Plans of the ground (bottom) and mezzanine (top) floors. Drawings by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, in association with F C Armstrong, dated October 1965 (BAP).



Figure 5. The rooftop garden, looking south to Collins Street, in 1968 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H2000.195/318).



Figure 6. The foyer in 1968 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H2000.195/311).

SITE DESCRIPTION

The Former Methodist Church Centre at 130-134 Little Collins Street is a 7-storey commercial building located on the north side of Little Collins Street between Russell Street and Exhibition Street. Constructed in 1966-67 to a design by architects Bates, Smart and McCutcheon in association with F C Armstrong, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

Rectangular in plan with a narrow frontage facing Little Collins Street, the low-scale building is surrounded by taller buildings. The broader western façade faces a laneway, Coromandel Place, which provides access to a basement car park.

The building is of concrete encased steel column and beam construction with facades of exposed brown brickwork. Simple frameless glazed openings are set into the main Little Collins Street façade, forming rows of individual double-hung windows with thin fibreglass surrounds. The resulting grid-like

pattern across the façade includes an accentuated double-height first floor level with double-height window openings. Rows of multi-paned, metal-framed windows are set into the west and north (rear) facades, and a large section of the visible eastern façade is a plain rendered wall.

At street level the facades to Little Collins Street and Coromandel Place are slightly recessed, with an aluminium fascia to the overhang. In Little Collins Street, a set of stairs is set well back from the building line behind an aluminium-framed, glazed screen. A ramp, set parallel to the building face, occupies an open space to the east, and a glazed shopfront is located at the south-west corner of the building. Towards the rear in Coromandel Place, a mosaic-tiled section of the recessed base contains pairs of deep-set windows which provided natural light to the interior.

INTEGRITY

The Former Methodist Church Centre, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building above street level, remains highly intact to its original construction in 1966-67. Some modifications have been made at street level, including insertion of a shopfront, however the general form of the structure at street level, including the recessed stairs, have been retained. These works have had minimal impact on the overall original design of the building.

Overall, the building retains a high degree of architectural integrity to the Post-War Modernist style in fabric, form and detail. While the building has undergone alterations at street level, these do not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the place as a fine example of a Post-War Modernist multi-storey commercial building.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The Former Methodist Church Centre at 130-134 Little Collins Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of 1960s to mid 1970s multi-storey commercial building design. This includes a solid grid-like front façade of regularly spaced, frameless glazed openings set in a dark brick wall, an accentuated first floor level and subtle recessed podium and the use of mosaic tiles to the side façade. Despite some modifications made to the building at street level, the upper facades of the Former Methodist Church Centre remain highly intact to their original design and can be clearly observed from Little Collins Street and Coromandel Place.

There are a number of buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the Former Methodist Church Centre. These are detailed below.

State-significant places

A small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne have been assessed as being of State-level significance and are included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). These include:

- Total House, 170-90 Russell Street (Bogle & Banfield 1964-65; VHR H2329 & HO1095)
- Former Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-44 Bourke Street (Peter Muller 1966-69)
- Victorian Government Offices, Treasury Reserve Precinct (Yuncken Freeman 1967-68 – outside the Hoddle Grid)
- Eagle House, 473 Bourke Street (Yuncken Freeman 1971-72; VHR H1807 & HO901)

- BHP House, 130-148 William Street (Yuncken Freeman 1969-72; VHR H1699 & HO767).

Locally-significant places

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from this period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme on a permanent basis. Those that are, are generally currently included within Heritage Precincts but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places, as follows:

Precinct Heritage Overlay



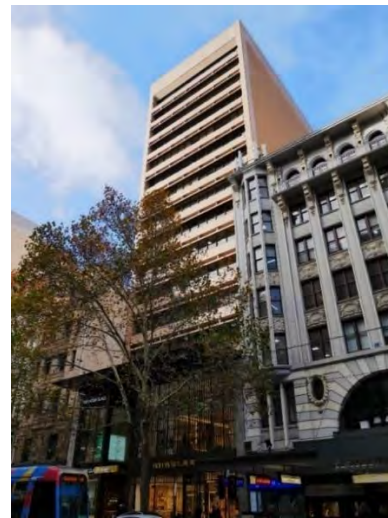
Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street, (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1974) included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct (Non-contributory).



Wales Corner, 221-231 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1964-66) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Swanston Street) Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, 251-257 Collins Street, (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1974-73 included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Flinders Lane) (Non-contributory).

One individual heritage place recently included in a site-specific Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis is the Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1966) (HO1213):



Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

Other examples

Despite the demolition of many 1960s and 1970s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the advancement of construction techniques from the 1960s through to the mid 1970s and demonstrate the broad range of design approaches of the period. The podiums of the majority of these places have been modified at street level. Examples include:



Former RACV Club, 111-129 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961) (Interim HO1068)



Former Australia Pacific House, 136-144 Exhibition Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1975-78)



Royal Insurance Group Building, 430-442 Collins Street, (Yuncken Freeman, 1965) (Interim HO1010)



Office Building, 516-520 Collins Street (architect unknown, c1974)



Former Guardian Building, 454-456 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1960-61)



Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building, 155-161 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961-62)



Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



MLA Building, 308-336 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1963)



Royal Mail House, 255-267 Bourke Street (D Graeme Lumsden, 1963)



Former Sleigh Corner Building, 158-164 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1964)



The Former Houston Building, 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kelle & Associates, 1965)



AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street (Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1965-69)



Former Dalgety House, 457-471 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp & Walker, 1966-68)



Former State Saving Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1967-68)



Former Legal & General House, 375-383 Collins Street (B Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking, 1967)



Former AMP Building, 344-350 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1966-68)



Equitable House, 335-349 Little Collins Street (unknown architect, 1968)



Former Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street (Meldrum & Partners with Peddle Thorp Walker, 1968-70)



Office Building, 178-188 William Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1972-73)



Cowan House, 457-469 Little Collins Street (E & G Kolle, 1969)



Lonsdale Exchange, 447-553 Lonsdale Street
(Commonwealth Department of Works, 1969)



Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William Street
(Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



Former Bryson Centre, 174-192 Exhibition Street (Perrot
Lyon Timlock & Kesa, 1970-72)



Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building,
359-373 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon,
c1972-75)



Nubrick House, 269-275 William Street (Buchan Laird &
Buchan, 1972)



Former Law Department Building, 221-231 Queen
Street (Fischer Group, 1972)



Former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch, 85-91 Queen Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1973)



Former MLC Building, 303-317 Collins Street (Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, c1970-1973)



Office Building, 589-603 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp de Preu, 1973-75)

Analysis

As a fine and highly intact representative example of Post-War Modernist building, the Former Methodist Church Centre at 130-134 Little Collins Street clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne. Similar to the small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings presently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme – and a number of other examples identified above – the Former Methodist Church Centre clearly demonstrates this class of place.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓	<p>CRITERION A Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION B Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).</p>
	<p>CRITERION C Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).</p>
✓	<p>CRITERION D Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).</p>
	<p>CRITERION E Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION F Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)</p>
	<p>CRITERION G Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION H Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an Individual Heritage Place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-4)	No
INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

OTHER

N/A

REFERENCES

Contextual History references contained within *City of Melbourne Hoddle Grid Heritage Review: Postwar Thematic Environmental History 1945-1975* Building Application Index (BAI), City of Melbourne.

Building Application Plans (BAP), City of Melbourne.

City of Melbourne Maps (CoMMaps), Site Details.

Financial Review (2 Jul 2019), 'Jeff Xu's Golden Age buys laneway site from Uniting Church', <<https://www.afr.com/>>, accessed November 2019.

Goad, Philip (2012), 'Bates Smart & McCutcheon' in Philip Goad & Julie Willis's (Eds.) (2012), *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Port Melbourne.

State Library of Victoria (SLV), picture collection, images and photographers as cited.

The Age.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

**Central Activities District
Conservation Study 1985** Ungraded

**Central City Heritage
Review 1993** Ungraded

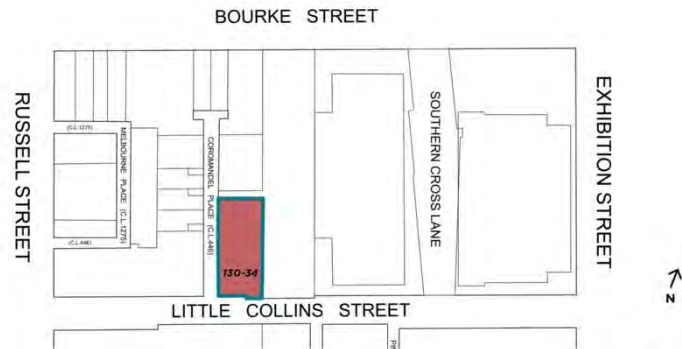
**Review of Heritage
Overlay Listings in the
CBD 2002** Ungraded

**Central City Heritage
Review 2011** Ungraded

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Former Methodist Church Centre

PS ref no: [HOXXXXN/A](#)



What is significant?

The Former Methodist Church Centre, 130-134 Little Collins Street, a multi-storey office building constructed in 1966-67.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing
- The building's high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations made to the street level facades are not significant.

How it is significant?

The Former Methodist Church Centre at 130-134 Little Collins Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

Constructed in 1966-67 to a design by Bates Smart & McCutcheon in association with F C Armstrong, the Former Methodist Church Centre has a clear association with the postwar building boom which transformed central Melbourne into a modern high-rise city. Constructed as the administrative centre for the Methodist Church, the building was used to coordinate the Church's activities throughout the State for over 50 years. (Criterion A).

The Former Methodist Church Centre is a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist office building. The building strongly reflects the style which was popular in the 1960s to the mid 1970s, particularly in central Melbourne. Constructed as a 7-storey building, the Former Methodist

Church Centre clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a 1960s to mid 1970s structure, including a solid grid-like front façade of regularly spaced, frameless glazed openings set in a dark brick wall, an accentuated first floor level and subtle recessed podium, and the use of materials such as mosaic tiles to the side façade. These design features demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style (Criterion D).

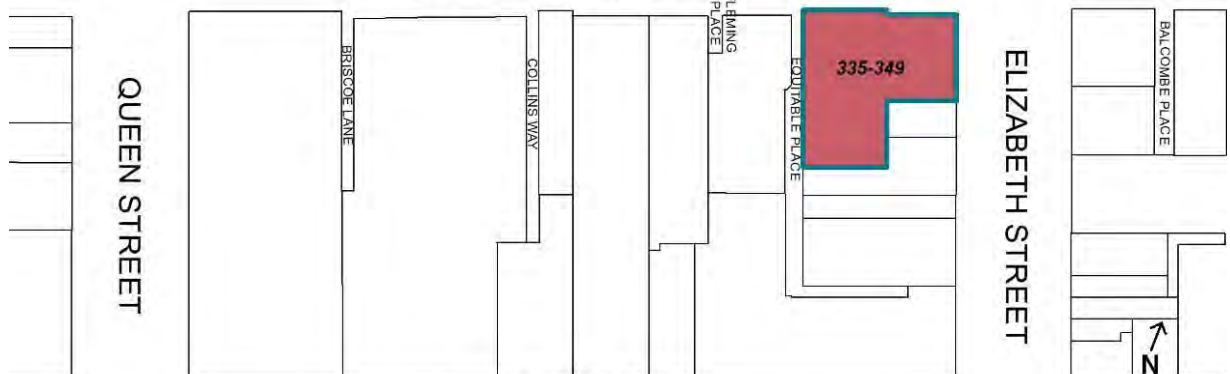
Primary source

[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\)](#)~~Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)~~ [Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\) \(updated March 2022\)](#)

SITE NAME	Equitable House
STREET ADDRESS	335-349 Little Collins Street, Melbourne
PROPERTY ID	105929



LITTLE COLLINS STREET



SURVEY DATE: October 2018

SURVEY BY: Context

HERITAGE INVENTORY N/A

EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY No

PLACE TYPE Individual Heritage Place

PROPOSED CATEGORY Significant

FORMER GRADE C

DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST: Stephenson & Meldrum (1925), [Unknown-Meldrum & Partners](#) (1968)

BUILDER: Reinforced Concrete & Monier Pipe Construction (1925), Unknown (1968)

DEVELOPMENT PERIOD: Postwar Period (1945-1975)

DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION: 1925, 1968

THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations.	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
HISTORIC THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
3 Shaping the urban landscape	3.2 Expressing an architectural style
5 Building a Commercial City	5.4 Developing a retail centre
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style
	1.9 Beyond the curtain wall
	1.10 Brutalism and brickwork
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Business and finance

LANDUSE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LANDUSE	
1890s	Warehouses and yards
1920s	Hotels
1960s	Retail

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Extent of overlay: Refer to map

SUMMARY

Equitable House, 335-349 Little Collins Street, Melbourne, constitutes two distinct built forms arranged in an L shape formation: one of 11 storeys fronting Little Collins Street, built in 1925; the other of 13 storeys fronting Elizabeth Street, built in 1968. The 1925 building was designed by architects Stephenson & Meldrum in the interwar Commercial Palazzo style. The 1968 building is an interesting combination of both the late twentieth century Brutalist and Post-War Modernist styles, [built to a design by architects Meldrum & Partners \(architect unknown\)](#). The site was long associated with James McEwan, whose wholesale and retail ironmongery business, James McEwan & Company Ltd, occupied part of the subject site for some 113 years, from 1852 to 1965. James McEwan & Company was acquired by Bunnings in 1993.

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

Interwar Period

Expressing an architectural style

The interwar period brought with it a surge in tall building construction in the central city, made possible by the use of structural steel and reinforced concrete framing. In response, a height limit was imposed by the City Council in 1916, dictated by the limitations on fire-fighting at that time. A maximum height of 40 metres (132 feet) was dictated for steel and concrete buildings, a limit that was not broken until the 1950s. Commercial buildings in the 1920s were mainly of the Commercial Palazzo style, as exemplified by Harry Norris's Nicholas Building in Swanston Street (1925). The style was an early attempt at creating a style suitable for the tall building. It was divided into a base, shaft and cornice, much like a Renaissance palazzo. The scale, however, was greatly enlarged, with the shaft stretching up to 10 storeys. By the 1930s, the soaring height of the new office towers was embraced and the vertical thrust emphasised in the Commercial Gothic style and the Jazz Moderne. Landmark examples include, respectively, Marcus Barlow's Manchester Unity Building (1929-32) and the Tompkins Bros' Myer Emporium in Bourke Street (1933) (Context 2012:19-20).

Developing a retail centre

By the early 1840s, Elizabeth and Swanston streets, from the Town Hall in the south-east to the General Post Office to the north-west, had become the focus of retail activity, influenced also by the location of the Western Market in the west of the city which operated as the city's premier wholesale fruit and vegetable market until 1930 (May 2016:176). The Eastern Market opened in 1847 as a fruit and vegetable market on the corner of Stephen Street (later Exhibition Street) and Bourke Street and drew retail further east.

Department stores offered customers a wide range of goods, organised into 'departments', under the one roof. In Melbourne, department store Buckley & Nunn, which opened in 1854, established Bourke Street as the preferred retail strip.

Development slowed during the economic depression of the 1890s, only recovering with the revival of immigration in the first decades of the twentieth century. Although affected by World War One in the period 1914-1918, by the end of the 1920s Melbourne's population had reached one million people. In the first decades of the twentieth century, most residents moved out of the city to the new suburbs, with the retail and office sectors rapidly taking up available properties (Marsden 2000:29-30).

After 1920, chain department stores grew rapidly, opening branches or new stores in central Melbourne. Department stores elevated 'fashion, drapery and furnishings to a level of luxury and range which differentiated it from the everyday or rural emporium' (Young and Spearritt 2008). With increasing car ownership and widespread distribution of shopping catalogues, department stores attracted shoppers from both the suburbs and rural areas, consolidating the central Melbourne area as the state's preferred retail destination.

Postwar Period

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture.

The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century

manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

Beyond the curtain wall

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding, screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

Brutalism and brickwork

Brutalism was another architectural style that emerged in commercial building design in Australia as early as 1959, when Harry Seidler used off-form concrete for an eight-storey office block in Ultimo, NSW. That same year, Melbourne architect Kevin Knight (from the office of Oakley & Parkes) prepared plans for the International Order of Oddfellows (IOOF) Building at 380 Russell Street, Melbourne that broke new ground with its banded façade of reinforced concrete spandrels.

Based on the work of modern architecture pioneer Le Corbusier, and largely inspired by his design for the *Unité d'Habitation* in Marseilles (1952), this architectural style became widely accepted internationally. Brutalism incorporated ideas of integrity in expression of materials (especially off-form

concrete), structure and function, and often gave rise to dramatic sculptural forms (VHD Hoyts Cinema Centre).

Brutalism became more widespread in central Melbourne in the 1970s. The Mid City Centre at 194-200 Bourke Street (Bogle & Banfield, 1969-70), is a notable example, with its façade of chamfered concrete volumes.

During the 1960s and 70s, face brickwork also made a return with the Houston Building at 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kolle & Associates, 1964-65), the State Savings Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (Godfrey & Spowers,

Hughes Mewton & Lobb, 1967-68) and the 13-storey Nubrik House at 269-275 William Street by architects Buchan, Laird & Buchan (1972) (NTAV 2014:22).

Business and finance in the postwar period

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most

significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17). Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

SITE HISTORY

The subject site comprises two allotments located at the corner of Elizabeth Street and Little Collins Street. The current multi-storey office building at 343-349 Little Collins Street constitutes two distinct built forms arranged in an L shape formation: one of 13 storeys fronting Elizabeth Street, built in 1968; and the other of 11 storeys fronting Little Collins Street, built in 1925 (CoMMaps).

The land comprising 335-349 Little Collins Street is part of Crown Allotment 9 of Block 13, first purchased by John Highett for £42 in 1837 (CoMMaps; DCLS c1839).

In 1852, James McEwan and John Houston supplied goods to storekeepers on the Victorian goldfields from a building at the subject site, which is located on the south-western corner of Elizabeth and Little Collins streets. In 1855 the partnership between Houston and McEwan was dissolved and James McEwan established a wholesale and retail ironmongery from the same building (*Age* 16 July 1965:8; Lethbridge 2011). In 1870, a new five-storey building was built on the site for McEwan. In 1924, Deans oil and colour store and James McEwan & Co operated from two buildings around the corner at 335-349 Little Collins Street (the balance of the subject site), which were both demolished in 1924 (*Argus* 17 January 1924:13).

McEwan House was the name given to the new building constructed in 1925 at 335-349 Little Collins Street (the part of the subject building fronting Little Collins Street and abutting Equitable Place to the west). Stephenson & Meldrum architects prepared plans for the reinforced concrete building in 1924. Carried to the then maximum height limit of 40 metres (132 feet), and containing 68,000 square feet of floor space, the building was taller than Collins House, located nearby, and a landmark in the area (*Argus* 17 January 1924:13). McEwan House was designed to integrate with the existing five-storey building 1870 building fronting Elizabeth Street, which has since been demolished (see Figure 1)

The 11-storey building had two main entrances off Equitable Place and three lifts (see Figure 2). The five-storey structure featured two lifts and had only one entrance, via Elizabeth Street. Three openings connected the buildings along their party wall. Special consideration was given to fireproofing McEwan House, which was achieved using the modern principle of proofing each floor separately and involving the Fire Underwriters' Association in the preparation of the plans (*Argus* 17 January 1924:13). The Reinforced Concrete & Monier Pipe Construction Co Pty Ltd constructed the building in 1925 with C S Steele as the consulting engineer. McEwan House was numbered 343-349 Little Collins Street and 119-125 Elizabeth Street in 1925 (Mahlstedt Map Section 1, no 14, 1925).



Figure 1. Showing the five-storey 1870 McEwan's building (demolished c1967) facing Elizabeth Street at the corner of Little Collins Street in 1953. (Source: Gordon 1953, SLV)

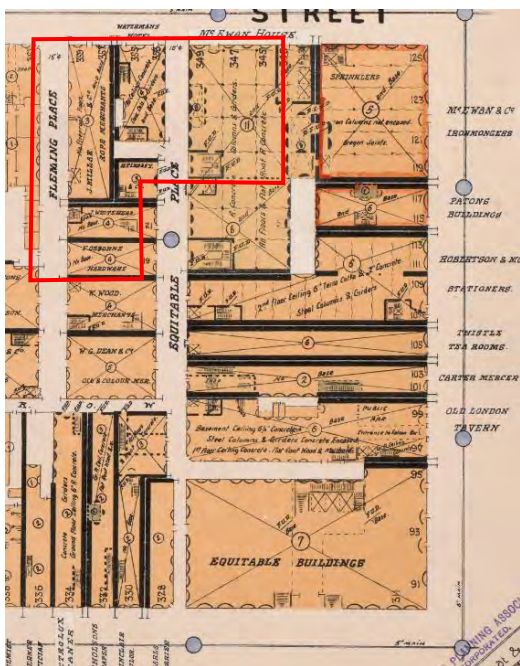


Figure 2. Detail from a 1925 Mahlstedt plan showing McEwan House outlined in red. Note the openings between the two built forms. (Source: Mahlstedt Map Section 1, no 14, 1925)

In 1926, the new building fronting Little Collins Street was tenanted by a diverse range of occupants including a jeweller, hairdresser, architect, manufacturing agent, builders, legal manager and broker (S&Mc 1926). The building had a tearoom on the second floor and the seventh floor was home to the Amateur Sport Club until 1960. The ground floor was used by McEwan as his main retail space (S&Mc 1926, 1960). In 1965, McEwan's moved to a new building between Bourke Street and Little

Collins Street, which had an available selling area double that of the subject site (Age 16 July 1965:8).

By 1968 the five-storey 1870 building was demolished and the 13 storey component of the subject building facing Elizabeth Street was constructed [to a design by Meldrum & Partners, architects, as an office block for 443 Little Collins St Pty Ltd and Stalbridge Chambers Pty Ltd, architect unknown](#) (RB 1969). By 1969 both the Elizabeth Street and Little Collins Street frontages of the building were addressed 343-349 Little Collins Street (RB 1969; S&Mc 1970). The Elizabeth Street projection was constructed of reinforced concrete (see Figure 3 and Figure 4).

The old and new buildings were joined by a wide arcade, named Elizabeth Arcade, indicating that the 1925 McEwan's building had been purchased by the same owners (see Figure 3). The north, east, south and west elevations all featured points of access as well as a prominent splayed corner entrance at the junction of Little Collins and Elizabeth streets.

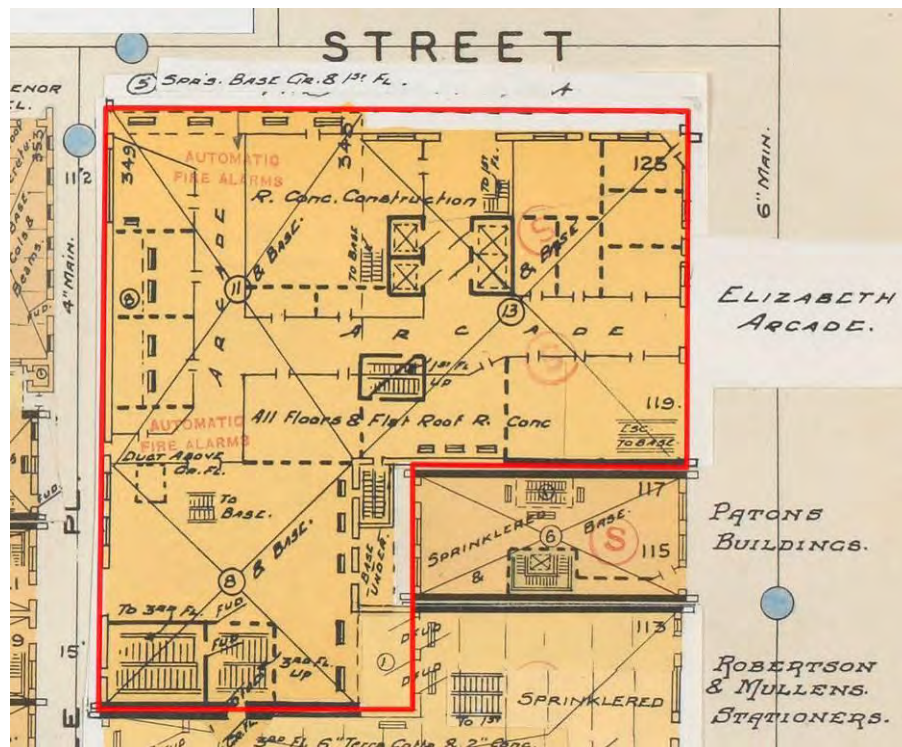


Figure 3. Detail from a 1948 Mahlstedt plan (amended in the 1960s) showing Equitable House at 335-349 Little Collins Street, outlined in red, in the late 1960s. (Source: Mahlstedt Map Section 1, no 14, 1948)



Figure 4. Photograph of Elizabeth Street west showing the 1968 building at 335-349 Little Collins Street between 1968 and 1972. (Source: Halla c1972, SLV: H36133/618)

Refurbishment and restoration works were carried out to Equitable House in 2006 at a cost of \$1,200,000 (Cordell 2018). The works included alterations to the façade of the building, external painting, alterations to the canopy and installation of signage (Cordell 2018).

Equitable House, probably named after the abutting laneway, Equitable Place, was internally subdivided in stages from 2005 to 2008. It currently contains one residential property, 121 offices, 19 retail shops and 7 food and drink outlets (CoMMaps).

James McEwen & Company Limited

The owner of McEwan House, James McEwan, was an ironmonger and wholesaler of hardware who had traded on the Ballarat Goldfields in the 1850s. An emigrant from Britain, he established James McEwen & Company Limited wholesale and retail ironmongery business in c1855. Initially traded on Elizabeth Street, the company later opened premises on Lonsdale Street as well as in Geelong. After McEwan's death in 1868, his England-based suppliers and partners William Kerr Thomson and Samuel Renwick carried on the business under the name of 'James McEwan & Company Limited'. In 1870 they commissioned the construction of the five-storey store on the corner of Elizabeth and Little Collins Streets, Melbourne (Lethbridge 2011).

The Australian National University holds the archives of McEwans Limited, the summary of which contains the following information:

James McEwan & Company Limited traded as a private company until 1887 [by which time, in addition to ironmongery, McEwan's was selling glassware, dinnerware and other ceramics] when it was incorporated as a public company and floated on the London Stock Exchange. Following the deaths of both Renwick, in 1888, and Thomson, in 1893, James McEwan & Company Limited suffered severe financial hardship. The London Bank of Australia acquired the Company in 1905...McEwan's Limited was formed in 1927 to acquire the shares of James McEwan & Company Pty Ltd and its subsidiaries...

In 1951 McEwan's Limited was floated as a public company and listed on the Melbourne Stock Exchange. By 1965 McEwan's had moved its main city store from the corner of Elizabeth and Little Collins Streets to Bourke Street, Melbourne...Around this time other McEwan's stores were established in the suburbs of Melbourne - Camberwell (1966), Clayton (1961), Croydon (1964), Dandenong (1964), Footscray (1966), Frankston (1970), Geelong (1966), Moonee Ponds (1963), Niddrie (1973) and Sunshine (1974) - as well as in Victorian regional shopping centres at Brandon Park (1970), Chadstone (1960), Doncaster Shopping Town (1969), Forest Hill (1964), Northland (1966), Southland (1968) and High Point West (1975).

In 1970 the first of McEwan's 'Magnet' discount hardware and timber stores was opened on a four-acre site in the outer Melbourne suburb of Ferntree Gully...Through McEwan's (Mildura) Pty Ltd the company operated two stores in Mildura and one at Red Cliffs in the north-west of Victoria. In Queensland the subsidiary, Williams McEwan's Pty Ltd, had stores at Burleigh Heads and Southport. Another subsidiary, Brittain's McEwan's Pty Ltd (acquired in 1969), operated three stores in Brisbane. McEwan's had now become one of the largest merchants of its kind, specialising in hardware and builders' supplies. It had 23 stores in Victoria, 5 in Queensland and 2 in the Australian Capital Territory...Following a successful takeover bid by Repco Limited, McEwan's Limited was delisted from the Stock Exchange on 28 July 1982 (Lethbridge 2011).

McEwan's was acquired by Bunnings in 1993.

Stephenson & Meldrum, architects of the Little Collins Street building

The firm Stephenson & Meldrum was established in 1921 by Arthur Stephenson (b1890, Melbourne) and Percy Meldrum. Stephenson enrolled at the Architectural Association School in London in 1918, at which he met instructor and architect Percy Meldrum. It is also where Stephenson met Donald 'Skipper' Turner. In 1936, Donald Turner, whom Stephenson also met at the Architectural Association School, joined the partnership and ran the Sydney office of Stephenson, Meldrum & Turner. The following year, Meldrum resigned as a director and the firm became Stephenson & Turner. By 1939, the firm had Melbourne and Sydney offices and totalled 80 employees (Goad 1999).

The firm became renowned for their revolutionary designs of health facilities. They designed most of the major and minor metropolitan and regional hospitals in Victorian and most Australian states, extending also to Asia and the Middle East. Stephenson & Turner's projects numbered many and

included numerous banks throughout Victoria, commercial commissions and industrial, educational, recreational, residential and religious projects, as well as projects for the World Fair and Australian embassy (Goad 1999).

Stephenson & Meldrum were the architects of Newspaper House, Collins Street, Melbourne (1933), the Mercy Hospital, East Melbourne (1934-5) and the Royal Melbourne Hospital, Parkville (1936-41), the latter in association with W A M Blakett. In addition, Stephenson & Turner are noted for designing the Royal Banking Chambers, Collins Street, Melbourne (1939-41), additions to the east of the Chemistry Building at the University of Melbourne (1963) and the General Motors Holden factory in Dandenong (1955-56) (Goad 1999).

The firm expanded and became one of the largest architectural practices in the southern hemisphere, with offices in Newcastle, Singapore, Adelaide and New Zealand, employing 3000-4000 people at its peak. It became known as 'the colossus of Australian architectural practices'. In 1995, architect John Castles merged with Stephenson & Turner to form Castles, Stephenson & Turner (Goad 1999).

Reinforced Concrete & Monier Pipe Constructions, engineers

The Monier system of construction was patented in 1867 by Joseph Monier, a French manufacturer of garden ware who made planter pots of coarse mortar reinforced with a grid of small-diameter iron bars. The technique and patents were gradually extended to cover, amongst other things, arch bridges. Monier appears to have sold his patents in various territories outright and died in poverty in 1906 (*John Monash*).

Following his retrenchment by the Melbourne Harbour Trust stemming from the 1890s depression, civil engineer John Monash (from 1918, Sir John Monash) established his own private practice with friend and fellow engineer J T Noble Anderson. Anderson had obtained patent rights from contracting engineers Carter Gummow & Co for the Monier system of reinforced concrete (Serle 1986).

Architectural historian Miles Lewis writes that 'Monier...was true reinforced concrete, with a complete theory and system of calculation to ensure that the steel was suitably disposed to take tension and shear forces' (Lewis 1988:11).

As Victorian agents for the system, Monash and Anderson began constructing bridges and had plans for concrete pipe manufacturing until they found themselves in legal and financial strife following the failure of one of their bridges in Bendigo.

In 1905 Monash established the Reinforced Concrete & Monier Pipe Constructions Co Ltd after having transitioned to erecting buildings, monopolising concrete construction in Victoria for several years to follow (Lewis 1988:11). From 1905 to 1914, John Monash was the engineering director of the company.

[Meldrum & Partners, architects](#)

[The architectural practice Meldrum & Partners was formed in 1959 by Percy Hayman Meldrum \(1887-1968\); it became Meldrum Burrows when Sydney-based Bill Burrows joined the firm. In 1951, Meldrum was joined in practice by his son, Richard John Meldrum \(1928-2004\), who had a bachelor's degree in architecture from the University of Melbourne. Meldrum Snr retired from practice in 1965. Meldrum Burrows gained particular prominence in the 1970s and 1980s and were involved in advising](#)

[on and strategic planning for, large projects, including the Australian Embassy at Riyadh, Saudi Arabia \(1989\) in collaboration with Daryl Jackson, and with Philip Cox in designing Parliament House, Darwin \(Willis 2012\).](#)

[Percy Hayman Meldrum studied at Ballarat College and was articled to A A Fritsch from 1907 to 1913. Moving to London in 1914, Meldrum practiced as an aircraft designer at the War Office and established an atelier in Wells Street, London, which became a gathering place for Australian architects engaged in war service. At the end of World War One Meldrum joined the staff of the Architectural Association, where he taught A G Stephenson and Donald Turner. In 1921, he returned to Australia to join A G Stephenson as Stephenson & Meldrum. Practising as principal designer, he strongly encouraged the inclusion of murals and sculpture in the firm's projects. His work during this time included Newspaper House, Collins Street \(1932\) and Castlemaine Art Gallery and Historic Museum \(1930\). Meldrum went on to practice as Meldrum & Noad between 1937 and the 1950s, during which time he won the 1942 RVIA Street Architecture Medal for the National Bank of Australasia building in Collins Street \(1938\) \(Willis 2012\).](#)

SITE DESCRIPTION

335-343 Little Collins Street

The building at the corner of Elizabeth and Little Collins streets is a 13 storey commercial building constructed in 1968 with frontages to both Elizabeth Street and Little Collins Street. With its use of dark precast non-loadbearing concrete curtain wall cladding to both frontages, it is primarily an example of the Post-War Modernist style. It also exhibits characteristics of the Brutalist style in the robust three-dimensional modularity of the concrete panels.

The facades consist of multiple narrow precast concrete panels, each with a sloping hood and vertical fins at each end to provide a measure of solar protection, and a single fixed aluminium framed window with curved corners. The panels repeat across both facades, with no formal corner element and only a simple horizontal flush parapet, as is typical of the style. The effect of these devices is to create an interesting pattern of light and shade across the façade, which is a characteristic of the Brutalist style.

The retail and entry shopfront to Elizabeth Street has been replaced over time, and there is a heavy cantilevered box awning over the ground floor shopfronts and entry lobby, which is not sympathetic to the fine grained modularity of the façade above.

Overall the building is an interesting combination of characteristics of both the late twentieth century Brutalist and Post-War Modernist styles.

345-349 Little Collins Street

The building, with a primary frontage to Little Collins Street, is a substantial 10 storey interwar commercial corner building constructed in 1925 in the interwar Commercial Palazzo style. It exhibits some of the main characteristics of the style, including projecting pilasters dividing the façade into four vertical bays sitting above a strong rusticated base.

The principal façade to Little Collins Street is of painted render, probably over non-loadbearing brickwork walls. The façade is separated horizontally into three layers, being the rusticated base, interim repetitive office floors over seven levels separated by spandrels, and a prominent cornice,

although the cornice now surmounts an open floor level that is probably the result of the alterations carried out in 2006. The elevation is somewhat unusual for this style in that it is asymmetrical, with a vertical element at the eastern end, defined by a pair of pilasters and terminating in a decorative pediment above the cornice level. It is possible that some decorative elements were removed when the building was refurbished in 2006.

The painted render side wall of the building fronting Equitable Place is simple and unadorned with regularly spaced window openings at all levels. The elevation steps down from the Little Collins Street frontage to a height of seven storeys.

All of the original windows to the main Little Collins Street and the northern section of the Equitable Place elevations have been replaced with single pane aluminium framed windows that are not openable. The original windows were probably steel framed and multi pane, and some of these survive in the southern section of the building along Equitable Place.

The ground floor has been significantly altered with new glazed shopfronts on both frontages. Above the ground floor is a narrow cantilevered box awning.

INTEGRITY

The 1968 building fronting Elizabeth Street is largely intact with its precast non-load bearing concrete curtain wall and aluminium framed windows to both elevations extant. At street level, shop fronts have been altered over time and there is a heavy cantilevered box awning. Overall the building is of high integrity.

The 1925 building fronting Little Collins Street is relatively intact with its original height and built form legible. The building retains characteristic elements of the interwar Commercial Palazzo style with a strong rusticated base, interim repetitive levels and a prominent cornice. Alterations include an open floor level above the cornice line and a lack of decorative detailing and extensive rustication at the base which was typical for the style, suggesting some details may have been removed in the 2006 alterations. The fenestration pattern appears to be original along both elevations. However, all windows to Little Collins Street and the northern section of Equitable Place have been replaced with fixed aluminium framed windows. Some original windows survive further down Equitable Place. At ground level all shop fronts have been altered over time and a narrow awning added. Notwithstanding these alterations, overall the building is of moderate integrity.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The Equitable House site at 335-349 Little Collins Street comprises two adjoining buildings in different styles constructed fifty years apart. The 1925 interwar building is comparable to other Commercial Palazzo or Chicagoesque buildings in central Melbourne, while the 1968 building exhibits key characteristics of the Post-War Modernist style.

The 1925 building on Little Collins Street uses structural steel and reinforced concrete framing, which became popular building materials in interwar Melbourne, inspired by Chicagoan architecture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Departing from load-bearing brick walls, many 1920s examples employed these new building methods that allowed windows to become larger and more prominent on facades, whilst also allowing for increased building heights. Most of the buildings from this period were designed in the interwar Commercial Palazzo or Chicagoesque styles, both of which derived from the rebuilding of the core area of Chicago after the 1871 fire. Although they were

characterised by an expressed structural system of concrete columns and floor plates, these examples typically included elements of classical detailing (albeit restrained) in the form of a rusticated base, expressed pilasters, projecting cornices and decorative mouldings.

The following examples are comparable with the 1925 building fronting Little Collins Street, being of a similar use, scale, style and/or construction date. The images and descriptions below are provided by CoM Maps unless stated otherwise, with images dating from c2000 or later.

Capitol Arcade, 115 Swanston Street (HO747, HO502 The Block Precinct)

An 11 storey concrete building with a ground floor arcade and a basement. Designed by Walter Burley Griffin and his wife Marion Mahony in association with Peck & Kempter in the Chicagoesque style. Built by John Monash's Reinforced Concrete & Monier Pipe Construction Company in 1924. Of special note is the auditorium/theatre with its Art Deco lighting and decor. Subdivided in stages from 1999 and concluding with the residential units in 2003.



Figure 5. Capitol Arcade, 115 Swanston Street, built in 1924.

Cavendish Houses, 27-37 Russell Street, 1927 (Significant in HO506 Flinders Lane Precinct)

A nine storey brick and concrete warehouse with a basement. Designed in the Greek Revival style by A & K Henderson. Built for the softgoods manufacturers Debenhams (Australia) Proprietary Limited in 1927. Refurbished to a design by David Earle & Associates and subdivided into residential units and ground floor retail with the addition of the top two floors in 1994.



Figure 6. 27-37 Russell Street, built in 1927.

London Stores, 341-357 Bourke Street, 1925 (HO545, HO509 Post Office Precinct)

The London Stores consists of three interconnected buildings. The 10 storey London Stores concrete building with basement (shown in picture below) is comparable to the subject building. Built in 1925 to the design of HW & FB Tompkins, the interwar building exhibits elements of the Classical Revival and Commercial Palazzo styles.



Figure 7. 341-357 Bourke Street, built in 1925.

Hardware House, 386-392 Little Bourke Street, 1926 (Significant in HO1205 Guildford & Hardware Laneways Precinct)

The six-storey corner building was built in 1926 for the new club premises for the Hardware Club, which was originally formed in the mid-1890s as a social club for members of the hardware trade. Within a year, it had 148 members, and within ten years, it boasted over 1000 members. It was designed by architect J V Ward and constructed by the Concrete Building Company.



Figure 8. 386-392 Little Bourke Street, built in 1926.

Cavendish House at 27-37 Russell Street, is particularly comparable to the 1925 section of Equitable House due to its scale and architectural style. Both sites demonstrate characteristics of the Commercial Palazzo style, notwithstanding that the Statement of Significance for Cavendish House refers to it as being designed in the Greek Revival style. The building is of a similar scale and shares many characteristics with Equitable House, including a façade divided into equal bays by projecting pilasters terminating at a cornice, albeit with a finer degree of decoration. Equitable House is distinguished by the asymmetry of its vertical element located at its eastern end as well as the relationship it has to the adjoining 1968 building. Although Cavendish house has a higher level of integrity than Equitable House, the two buildings are comparable in terms of their scale and for architectural style. Despite changes to its façade, Equitable House retains elements that are characteristic of the Commercial Palazzo style

In regard to the 1968 building at the corner of Elizabeth and Little Collins streets, the following examples are comparable.

State-significant places

A small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne have been assessed as being of State-level significance and are included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). These include:

- Total House, 170-90 Russell Street (Bogle & Banfield 1964-65; VHR H2329 & HO1095)
- Former Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-44 Bourke Street (Peter Muller 1966-69)
- Victorian Government Offices, Treasury Reserve Precinct (Yuncken Freeman 1967-68 – outside the Hoddle Grid)
- Eagle House, 473 Bourke Street (Yuncken Freeman 1971-72; VHR H1807 & HO901)
- BHP House, 130-148 William Street (Yuncken Freeman 1969-72; VHR H1699 & HO767).

Locally-significant places

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from this period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme on a permanent basis. Those that are, are generally currently included within Heritage Precincts but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places, as follows:

Precinct Heritage Overlay



Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Wales Corner, 221-231 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1964-66) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Swanston Street) Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.

Former State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street, (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1974) included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct (Non-contributory).



Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, 251-257 Collins Street, (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1974-73) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Flinders Lane) (Non-contributory).

One individual heritage place recently included in a site-specific Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis is the Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1966) (HO1213):



Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

Other examples

Despite the demolition of many 1960s and 1970s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the advancement of

construction techniques from the 1960s through to the mid 1970s and demonstrate the broad range of design approaches of the period. The podiums of the majority of these places have been modified at street level. Examples include:



Former RACV Club, 111-129 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961) (Interim HO1068)



Former Australia Pacific House, 136-144 Exhibition Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1975-78)



Royal Insurance Group Building, 430-442 Collins Street, (Yuncken Freeman, 1965) (Interim HO1010)



Office Building, 516-520 Collins Street (architect unknown, c1974)



Former Guardian Building, 454-456 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1960-61)



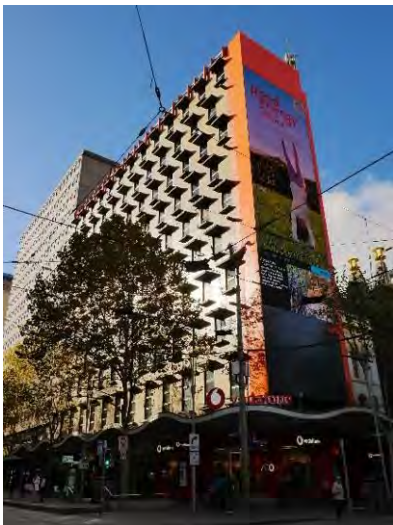
Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building, 155-161 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961-62)



Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



MLA Building, 308-336 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1963)



Royal Mail House, 255-267 Bourke Street (D Graeme Lumsden, 1963)



Former Sleigh Corner Building, 158-164 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1964)



The Former Houston Building, 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kolle & Associates, 1965)



AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street (Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1965-69)



Former Dalgety House, 457-471 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp & Walker, 1966-68)



Former State Saving Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1967-68)



Former Legal & General House, 375-383 Collins Street (B Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking, 1967)



Former AMP Building, 344-350 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1966-68)



Office Building, 178-188 William Street
(McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1972-73)



Former Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street
(Meldrum & Partners with Peddle Thorp Walker, 1968-70)



Former Methodist Church Centre, 130-134 Little Collins Street
(Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1966-67)



Cowan House, 457-469 Little Collins Street (E & G Kolle, 1969)



Lonsdale Exchange, 447-553 Lonsdale Street
(Commonwealth Department of Works, 1969)



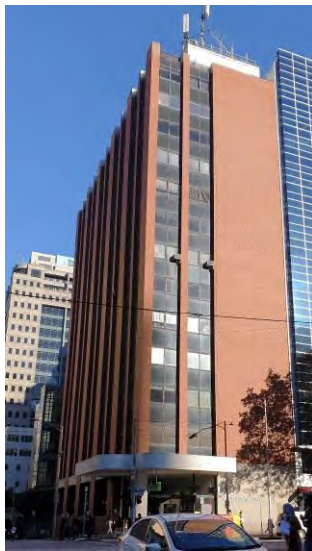
Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William Street
(Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



Former Bryson Centre, 174-192 Exhibition Street (Perrot Lyon Timlock & Kesa, 1970-72)



Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building, 359-373 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, c1972-75)



Nubrick House, 269-275 William Street (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1972)



Former Law Department Building, 221-231 Queen Street (Fischer Group, 1972)



Former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch, 85-91 Queen Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1973)



Former MLC Building, 303-317 Collins Street (Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, c1970-1973)



Office Building, 589-603 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp de Preu, 1973-75)

Analysis

The Royal Insurance Group Building at 430-442 Collins Street, constructed in 1965, is particularly comparable to the 1968 section of Equitable House due to its scale and architectural style. Both sites demonstrate characteristics of the the Post-War Modernist style with some aspects of the Brutalist style also in evidence. The Royal Insurance Group Building is somewhat higher at 18 storeys, but the facades of both buildings exhibit multiple narrow precast concrete panels with no formal corner element The precast panels to the Equitable House facades are of particular interest as they are three dimensional with a sloping hood and vertical fins at each end to provide a measure of solar protection and to create repetitive patterns of light and shade across the façade, a characteristic of the Brutalist style.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓ **CRITERION A**
Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).

CRITERION B
Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).

CRITERION C
Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).

✓ **CRITERION D**
Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).

CRITERION E
Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).

CRITERION F
Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)

CRITERION G
Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).

CRITERION H
Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-3)	No
TO BE INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

OTHER

N/A

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PREVIOUS STUDIES

**Central Activities District
Conservation Study 1985** D

**Central City Heritage
Review 1993** C

**Review of Heritage
overlay listings in the
CBD 2002** Ungraded

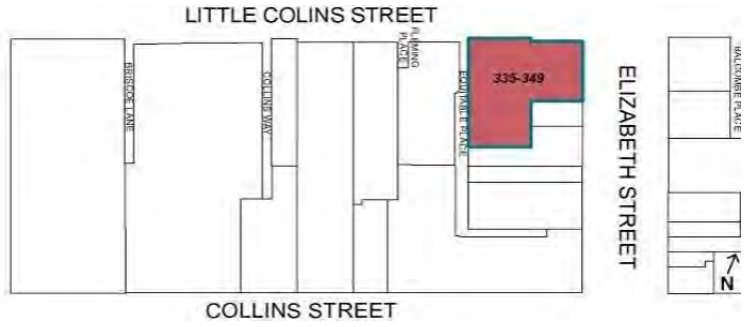
**Central City Heritage
Review 2011** Ungraded

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Equitable House



PS ref no: HO1350XXXX





What is significant?

Equitable House, at 335-349 Little Collins Street, Melbourne, comprising two structures, one built in 1925 and the other built in 1968, ~~is significant.~~

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- ~~The building's~~ original form and scale of both buildings;
- ~~The building's~~ original composition of façades comprising multiple narrow precast concrete panels with aluminium windows (1968 building);
- ~~External~~ configuration of facades demonstrating aspects of the interwar Commercial Palazzo style and wall surfaces of painted cement render (1925 building); ~~and~~
- ~~Original~~ steel framed windows on the Equitable Place façade (1925 building).

Later alterations, particularly at street level, are not significant.

How it is significant?

Equitable House at 335-349 Little Collins Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

Equitable House, comprising two structures, one built in 1925 and the other built in 1968, is historically significant for the evidence it provides of two waves of retail and office development in Melbourne in the 1920s and post-World War Two. The building reflects the growth and progress in the city in the 1920s and 1960s that resulted in architecturally designed, company-named buildings being erected. The 1925 component of the building at 335-349 Little Collins Street, McEwan House, is historically significant for its long association with wholesale and retail ironmongery business James McEwan & Company Ltd (1852-1965). The business commenced in Melbourne at the corner of Elizabeth and Little Collins streets supplying goods to storekeepers on the Victorian goldfields, and it retained a presence there for some 113 years. The company prospered and, by the 1970s, McEwan's had become one of the largest merchants of its kind, specialising in hardware and builders' supplies, with 23 stores in Victoria, five in Queensland and two in the Australian Capital Territory. McEwan's was acquired by Bunnings in 1993. (Criterion A)

The building fronting Little Collins Street, constructed in 1925 to a design by architects Stephenson & Meldrum, is significant as a relatively intact example of interwar commercial development in central Melbourne, in the interwar Commercial Palazzo style. Along with the Chicagoesque style, the Commercial Palazzo style characterised this interwar wave of development within the Melbourne CBD. The 1925 building demonstrates key characteristics of the style. This includes a strong vertical emphasis resulting from projecting pilasters and mullions, the pilasters dividing the façade into four vertical bays sitting above a strong rusticated base, a substantial cornice, and large horizontally proportioned windows separated by articulated spandrels at each floor. It is unusual in that it is asymmetrical, with a vertical element at the eastern end that is defined by a pair of pilasters, terminating in a decorative pediment above the cornice level. (Criterion D)

The building fronting Elizabeth Street, constructed in 1968 [to a design by architects Meldrum & Partners](#), is significant as a largely intact example of postwar commercial development in central Melbourne, which utilised the Post-War Modernist style that characterised this new wave of development. Buildings designed in this style represented the new modernism in their modular, industrial aesthetic incorporating features such as external sun shades, consistent access to daylight, open floor plans, air conditioning and centralised lift and service cores to meet new standards for commercial office accommodation.

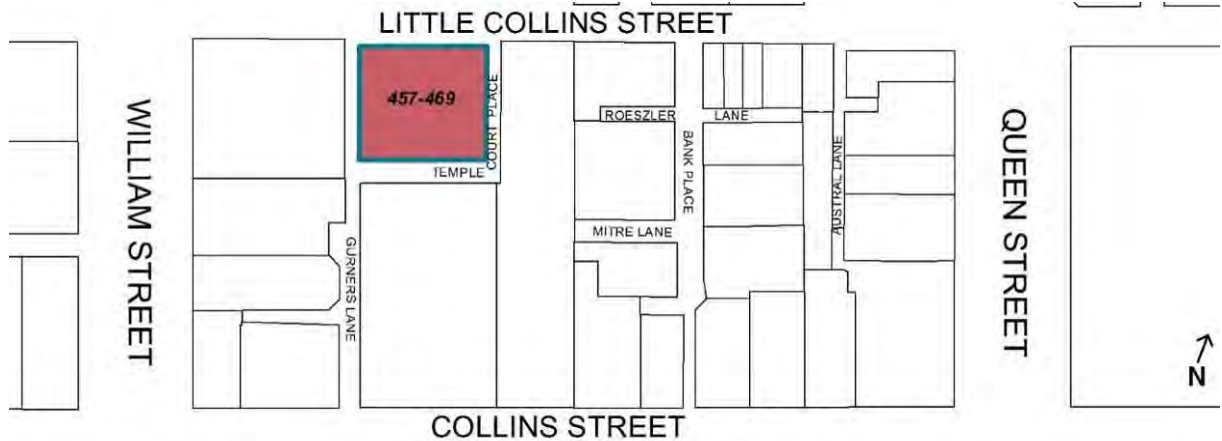
~~(Criterion D)~~

The façade of Equitable House with multiple narrow precast concrete panels with no formal corner element, which are of particular interest as they are three dimensional with a sloping hood and vertical fins at each end for solar protection and which create repetitive patterns of light and shade across the façade, a characteristic of the Brutalist style. ~~Although the designer of t~~The 1968 building is ~~not known, it is~~ an important 1960s Post-War Modernist building demonstrating a sophisticated and well-detailed resolution to the challenges posed by postwar commercial design. (Criterion D)

Primary source

~~[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\)](#)~~[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\) \(updated March 2022\)](#)

SITE NAME	Cowan House (Not included in a Heritage Overlay – see Addendum in Volume 1)
STREET ADDRESS	457-469 Little Collins Street, Melbourne
PROPERTY ID	105938



SURVEY DATE: May 2019

SURVEY BY: Context

HERITAGE INVENTORY N/A

EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY No

PLACE TYPE Individual Heritage Place

PROPOSED CATEGORY Significant

FORMER GRADE Ungraded

DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST: E and G Kolle & Associates

BUILDER: K G Hooker

DEVELOPMENT PERIOD : Postwar Period (1945-1975)

DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION: 1969

THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations.	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style 1.9 Beyond the curtain wall
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Business and finance

LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Offices
1920s	Offices
1960s	Offices

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Extent of overlay: Refer to map

SUMMARY

Cowan House, at 457-469 Little Collins Street, is an 18 storey postwar office building designed by E and G Kolle & Associates, architects and engineers. Opened in 1969 for Capital Counties (Australia) Pty Ltd, it was occupied by that company until c1973. Initially named the Capital and Counties building, from 1974 it *was known as Cowan House* after its ground floor occupants, Cowan J Assets Pty Ltd, investment consultants who occupied the building from 1970-73. It is used mainly as office space today.

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

Beyond the curtain wall

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding, screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

Business and finance in the postwar period

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17).

Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

SITE HISTORY

The subject land was first purchased by G Smith and G Robson in 1837 as part of Crown Allotments 2 and 3 of Block 14 respectively ('Plan of Melbourne' 1838; DCLSV 1839).

Before Cowan House was constructed, an assemblage of buildings occupied the subject land between Gurners Lane and Temple Court Place, with three buildings fronting Little Collins Street and several smaller structures built on the rear half of the allotment (Mahlstedt Map no 14, 1888; Mahlstedt Map Section 1 no 17, 1925). The buildings were addressed as numbers 455 to 469 Little Collins Street between 1900 and 1965 (S&Mc 1900, 1965).

Brougham Chambers, a three-storey office building, existed on the corner of Little Collins Street and Gurners Lane from c1900 to 1965 (S&Mc 1900, 1965). The Chambers were let to several professional tenants during this time, typically to individuals engaged in the legal profession, consistent with the use of many of the office buildings in the area.

Capital & Counties (Australia) Pty Ltd acquired the subject site in 1965 (CT:V8912 F035). In 1967 a building permit was filed by the company for the erection of a new building at 457-469 Little Collins Street to the value of \$1.8 million, and in 1968 a tender was advertised for the construction of a multi-level office building on the site (*Age* 10 February 1968:81). It opened on 9 June 1969 (*Age* 13 June 1969:12).

Capital & Counties (Australia) Pty Ltd was a Melbourne-based subsidiary of Counties Properties Company Ltd, an English real estate investment company and developer with a portfolio of prestigious properties across the United Kingdom, Europe and America (*Age* 27 April 1971:16). The subject building was the company's first venture into Melbourne city development (*Age* 20 July 1968:4). Within three and a half years of its establishment in Melbourne, the company had invested in the erection of six major office buildings – four in Melbourne and two in Sydney – with a total value of between \$80 and \$90 million (*Age* 27 April 1971:16). In Melbourne, this included Marland House (also designed by E & G Kolle) and Dalgety House, both in Bourke Street and both built concurrently with the subject building (*Age* 6 June 1968:7; *Age* 27 April 1971:16).

K G Hooker, builders, constructed the building to the design of architects E & G Kolle & Associates (*Age* 10 February 1968:81; *Age* 2 April 1969:24). The building was constructed of reinforced concrete columns, beams, floors and roof with a colonnade on the northern and eastern elevations (see Figure 1, Figure 2 and Figure 3). The structure was built using 'waffle' formwork flooring slabs, a new technique at the time, noted for its weight-saving efficiency (*Age* 2 April 1969:24). Capital & Counties (Australia) Pty Ltd and the building's architects, E & G Kolle & Associates, were both occupants of the new building along with Harston Partridge & Co Pty Ltd, law stationers, and Weigall & Crowther solicitors, who had both occupied an earlier building on the subject site (*Age* 13 June 1969:12; *Age* 7 March 1970:90; S&Mc 1974).

Notable long-term tenants on the site included: Harston Partridge & Co Pty Ltd printers and law stationers at 455-457 Little Collins Street from c1925 and in the subject building until at least 1983; and Weigall & Crowther, solicitors, at 459-463 Little Collins Street from c1915 to 1965, who were also tenants in the subject building until c1987 (S&Mc 1915, 1925, 1965; *Age* 27 June 1970:60; *Age* 7 July 1983:20; *Age* 27 May 1987:80).

The subject building at 457-469 Little Collins Street was known as the Capital and Counties building until 1973, after which it appears in the Sands & McDougall directory as Cowan House (S&Mc 1974). The building took the name of its ground floor occupants, Cowan J Assets Pty Ltd investment consultants, who were listed as the tenants there in 1970 but had vacated the premises by 1974 (*Age* 20 July 1968:4; S&Mc 1970, 1974).

James Wright Cowan was an economist and investment counsellor, director of James Cowan Associates Pty Ltd and senior partner in several investment firms associated with the Cowan Group (*Sydney Morning Herald* 2 March 1967:8; *Canberra Times* 21 April 1991:29; *Age* 25 February 1970:13). The Cowan Group encompassed several brokering and investment corporations active in the 1960s and 1970s in Melbourne and Sydney (*Sydney Morning Herald* 5 March 1964:14; *Sydney Morning Herald* 6 March 1971:35; *Age* 3 September 1970:15; *Sydney Morning Herald* 10 January 1968:14). In 1971, Functional Holdings Ltd put in a bid for the takeover of the Cowan Group (Holdings) Ltd (*Sydney Morning Herald* 17 March 1971:21). Investors Diversified Benefits Pty Ltd, distributors for James Cowan Investment Services, operated on the eighth floor of the subject building in 1970 (*Age* 14 November 1970:100).

BP Australia Nominees Propriety Ltd acquired ownership of the building in 1978 (CT:V8912 F035).

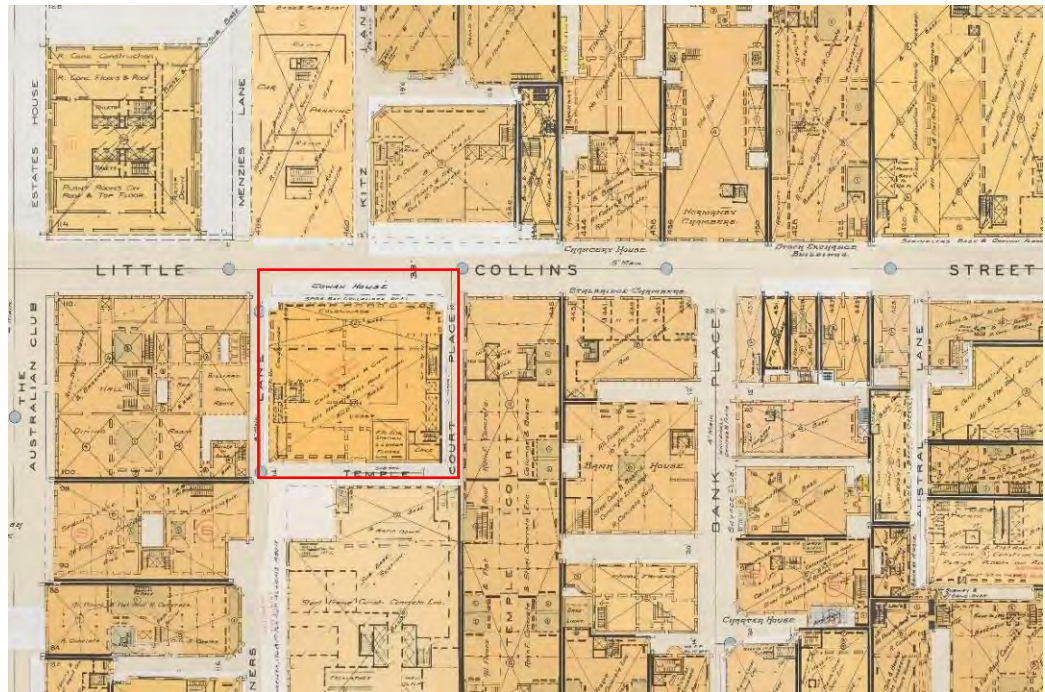


Figure 1. Extract from plan showing subject building outlined in red. (Source: Mahlstedt 1948, SLV)



Figure 2. Cowan House, 457-469 Little Collins Street, Melbourne (Sievers 1970, SLV [copyright](#))



Figure 3. Detail of Cowan House, 457-469 Little Collins Street, Melbourne (Sievers 1970, SLV [copyright](#))

In 1985 internal alterations and refurbishments were carried out on levels one to 14 of the subject building, which was subsequently advertised for sale as a 'modern recently refurbished building' in 1987 (MBAI; *Age* 24 February 1987:33). The ground floor had construction work and alterations carried out in 1991; it is likely that this work involved the infill of the plaza (MBAI).

The building presently houses 23 businesses, two shops, and food and drink outlets (CoMMaps).

E and G Kolle & Associates, architects and engineers and occupier 1969-c1975

E and G Kolle & Associates were the architects and engineers of the subject building, and occupied the premises until c1975. E and G Kolle & Associates comprised Erik and Grethe Kolle.

Erik Kolle was a Danish engineer practising in Melbourne in the postwar era (*Age* 23 January 1951:3; *Age* 11 February 1956:58). Erik Kolle & Associates Pty Ltd, a chartered engineering consultants' firm, was established c1956 with an office located in William Street, Melbourne (*Age* 11 February 1956:58). Kolle reputedly was responsible for introducing lightweight foam concrete to Australia, a patented technique that involved adding aluminium powder to cement mixture to create a lightweight concrete (*Sydney Morning Herald* 4 July 1951:2).

Danish born Grethe Kolle was a registered architect and a member of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (*Age* September 1958:49). She arrived in Melbourne from Denmark in 1952 where she worked in an architect's office while studying for an examination to be registered as an architect in Australia (*Sun-Herald* 28 November 1954:60). She studied at a technical college in Copenhagen before taking her degree at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Denmark (*Sun-Herald* 28 November 1954:60; *News* 11 November 1954:20). As part of her course, Grethe was one of four women in a cohort of 100 who completed a practical course in bricklaying and plastering (*Sun-Herald* 28 November 1954:60).

E and G Kolle & Associates, architects and engineers, was established c1963 and appears to have operated until c1975 (*Age* 18 April 1963:7; *Age* 21 September 1974:74). The firm designed the Unitarian Peace Memorial Church in Grey Street, East Melbourne, opened in 1966 (*Cross-Section* 1966). They were responsible for the design of Marland House at 562-574 Bourke Street (1975), which, at 32-storeys, was then one of the tallest buildings in Australia, and were the architects for a \$50 million development at the Royal Agricultural Society Showgrounds, Moore Park, Sydney, and the MLC Centre in Martin Place, Sydney (1975) (*Age* 27 April 1971:13; *Age* 18 August 1973:5; NSW State Archives and Records; SRIA 1994:15).

SITE DESCRIPTION

Cowan House at 457-469 Little Collins Street, Melbourne, is an 18-storey commercial building in the Post-War Modernist style constructed in 1969 and designed by architects E and G Kolle & Associates. Located on the southern side of Little Collins Street, it occupies an island site bound by Temple Court Place to its east and south and Gurners Lane to the west.

The principal façade to Little Collins Street comprises a 15 storey office tower with a substantial setback from a two-storey podium level built to the street frontage. The principal tower façade is symmetrical, comprising nonloadbearing precast concrete curtain wall panels divided into 10 vertical bays. Each panel is a U-shaped precast concrete frame with a large window opening infilled with two panes of fixed glass in an aluminium frame. Above and below each window are two courses of narrow red/brown glazed tiles laid in vertical stack bond. The top of the building has no formal termination as is typical of the style, except that a concrete frame extends above the roof line at every second column grid, forming a pergola, with a simple metal balustrade set between the concrete posts. The 17th floor of the building is recessed, creating a roof deck that originally serviced a penthouse level.

At the street level there is a two-storey horizontal podium built to the property boundary, supported by a colonnade of five aluminium clad columns. The podium returns into the Temple Court Place and Gurners Lane frontages, with recessed sections at the corners. A continuous horizontal band of glazing extends around the first-floor podium, and the wall above and below the band of glazing is clad in masonry (probably limestone) tiles, which may be a later alteration (refer to 1970 configuration in Figure 2 & Figure 3). Aluminium-clad vertical fins are fixed to the face of the podium in alignment with the columns, probably as part of the 1991 alterations. The street level shop fronts are set back to form an undercroft, and the shop fronts have been replaced.

The podium undercroft continues along Gurners Lane as a loggia behind a colonnade of seven square columns, stepping down to Temple Court Place at its southern end. The western wall of the tower behind the podium is clad in a variety of materials providing textural interest to the façade. In its middle section, the building is clad in rough face concrete blocks, whilst wall panels set between expressed structure at the southern and northern ends are clad in the red/brown ceramic tiles. Immediately above the colonnade the walls are clad in glazed muted green tiles laid in vertical stack bond, and the same tiles also clad the columns. The panels below the columns to street level are clad in bluestone.

The rear elevation to Temple Court Place is asymmetrical. Above the base levels, the tower element utilises the same precast concrete panels with red/brown ceramic tiles above and below the windows as used on the principal façade to Little Collins Street. The two eastern bays differ, being clad in the rough face concrete blocks rather than precast panels. At street level the building is also clad in the rough face concrete blocks whilst the first floor is clad in the glazed green tiles used along the Gurners Lane loggia. Five windows align with the windows of the tower above. At street level various openings provide service access into the building including an open grille door allowing car access to the basement. Above this door a large window is divided vertically into five panels.

The eastern elevation to Temple Court Place is clad in the rough face blocks concrete blocks. At the northern end the return section of the tower has an expressed structural concrete frame infilled with red/brown glazed ceramic tiles laid in vertical stretcher bond.

INTEGRITY

Cowan House is highly intact with very few changes visible to original or early fabric.. The building retains its original two-storey podium level, recessed office tower with modular precast concrete curtain wall cladding including original aluminium frame windows and red/brown ceramic tiles, and with original details and varying wall cladding finishes.

Alterations are minimal and largely limited to the podium on the Little Collins Street frontage. These include the aluminium cladding of the podium level columns and contemporary shopfronts at street level, the addition of aluminium clad vertical fins to the face of the podium in alignment with the columns, and the (probable) recladding of first floor podium level with limestone tiles. Overall the building has very high integrity.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The 1950s saw the development of the modern multi-story office building in Melbourne, often built for insurance companies or finance companies, or for professional offices. From this time through to the 1970s, the Post-War Modernist style enjoyed widespread popularity, particularly for high-rise

commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne. Reinforced concrete frames provided the structural systems, allowing the façade to be clad in a non-load bearing curtain wall. In early examples, curtain walls were typically fully glazed, while in later examples, precast concrete was used to achieve variety of expression and flexibility of form, led by Bates Smart & McCutcheon's South British Building of 1960-62.

There are a number of buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to Cowan House. These are detailed below.

State-significant places

A small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne have been assessed as being of State-level significance and are included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). These include:

- Total House, 170-90 Russell Street (Bogle & Banfield 1964-65; VHR H2329 & HO1095)
- Former Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-44 Bourke Street (Peter Muller 1966-69)
- Victorian Government Offices, Treasury Reserve Precinct (Yuncken Freeman 1967-68 – outside the Hoddle Grid)
- Eagle House, 473 Bourke Street (Yuncken Freeman 1971-72; VHR H1807 & HO901)
- BHP House, 130-148 William Street (Yuncken Freeman 1969-72; VHR H1699 & HO767).

Locally-significant places

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from this period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme on a permanent basis. Those that are, are generally currently included within Heritage Precincts but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places, as follows:

Precinct Heritage Overlay

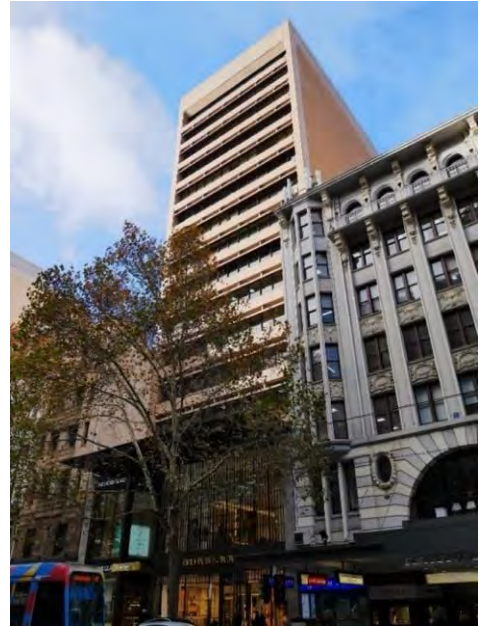


Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Wales Corner, 221-231 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1964-66) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Swanston Street) Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.

Former State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street, (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1974) included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct (Non-contributory).



Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, 251-257 Collins Street, (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1974-73) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Flinders Lane) (Non-contributory).

One individual heritage place recently included in a site-specific Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis is the Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1966) (HO1213):



Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

Other examples

Despite the demolition of many 1960s and 1970s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the advancement of construction techniques from the 1960s through to the mid 1970s and demonstrate the broad range of design approaches of the period. The podiums of the majority of these places have been modified at street level. Examples include:



Former RACV Club, 111-129 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961) (Interim HO1068)



Former Australia Pacific House, 136-144 Exhibition Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1975-78)



Royal Insurance Group Building, 430-442 Collins Street, (Yuncken Freeman, 1965) (Interim HO1010)



Office Building, 516-520 Collins Street (architect unknown, c1974)



Former Guardian Building, 454-456 Collins Street
(Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1960-61)



Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building,
155-161 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon,
1961-62)



Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke
Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



MLA Building, 308-336 Collins Street (Stephenson &
Turner, 1963)



Royal Mail House, 255-267 Bourke Street (D Graeme
Lumsden, 1963)



Former Sleigh Corner Building, 158-164 Queen Street
(Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1964)



The Former Houston Building, 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kolle & Associates, 1965)



AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street (Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1965-69)



Former Dalgety House, 457-471 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp & Walker, 1966-68)



Former State Saving Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1967-68)



Former Legal & General House, 375-383 Collins Street (B Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking, 1967)



Former AMP Building, 344-350 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1966-68)



Equitable House, 335-349 Little Collins Street
(unknown architect, 1968)



Former Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street
(Meldrum & Partners with Peddle Thorp Walker, 1968-70)



Former Methodist Church Centre, 130-134 Little Collins Street
(Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1966-67)



Office Building, 178-188 William Street (McIntyre
McIntyre & Partners, 1972-73)



Lonsdale Exchange, 447-553 Lonsdale Street
(Commonwealth Department of Works, 1969)



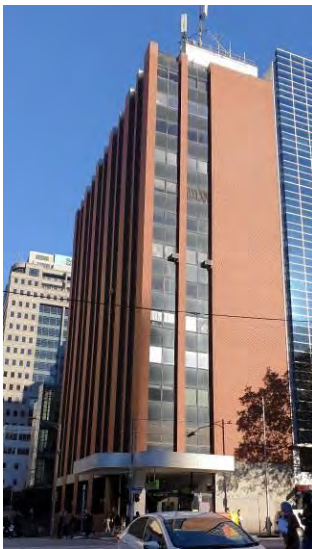
Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William Street
(Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



Former Bryson Centre, 174-192 Exhibition Street (Perrot Lyon Timlock & Kesa, 1970-72)



Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building, 359-373 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, c1972-75)



Nubrick House, 269-275 William Street (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1972)



Former Law Department Building, 221-231 Queen Street (Fischer Group, 1972)



Former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch, 85-91 Queen Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1973)



Former MLC Building, 303-317 Collins Street (Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, c1970-1973)



Office Building, 589-603 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp de Preu, 1973-75)

Analysis

In its early use of a non-loadbearing precast concrete panel façade system, Cowan House at 457-469 Little Collins Street is comparable to a number of other buildings in central Melbourne included – or proposed for inclusion – in the HO, although distinguished by its early use of reinforced concrete ‘waffle’ floor slabs. It is particularly comparable with the Wales Corner building at 227 Collins Street (Contributory in HO502 The Block Precinct) the former HC Sleigh building at 160 Queen Street (Recommended as individually significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review) and the Reserve Bank of Australia at 60 Collins Street (Contributory in HO504 Collins East Precinct). It shares with these examples’ characteristics consistent with the Post-War Modernist style, including concrete post and slab construction, a non-loadbearing precast concrete panel façade with a repetitive modular geometry and a street level undercroft and colonnade. Unusually, in this instance, this undercroft forms part of a podium that aligns with the street whilst the tower component of the building above is set back. The return of the undercroft along Gurners Lane also allows for sheltered pedestrian access through to Collins Street.

Unusually, the positioning of Cowan House on an island site has allowed for a range of detailing to all four facades and for the use of a variety of materials of differing colours and textures with each elevation being well considered and detailed.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

- | | |
|---|--|
| ✓ | <p>CRITERION A
Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).</p> |
| | <p>CRITERION B
Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).</p> |
| | <p>CRITERION C
Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).</p> |
| ✓ | <p>CRITERION D
Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).</p> |
| ✓ | <p>CRITERION E
Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).</p> |
| | <p>CRITERION F
Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)</p> |
| | <p>CRITERION G
Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).</p> |
| | <p>CRITERION H
Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).</p> |
-

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-3)	No
TO BE INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

OTHER

N/A

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PREVIOUS STUDIES

**Central Activities District
Conservation Study 1985** Ungraded

**Central City Heritage
Review 1993** Ungraded

**Review of Heritage
overlay listings in the
CBD 2002** Ungraded

**Central City Heritage
Review 2011** Ungraded

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Cowan House



PS ref no: [HOXXXXN/A](#)



What is significant?

Cowan House at 457-469 Little Collins Street, Melbourne, designed by architects E & G Kolle & Associates and constructed in 1969, is significant.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original form and scale;
- eOriginal modular composition of the facades to the office tower comprising precast concrete panels with inset aluminium frame windows and glazed ceramic tiles;
- eOriginal podium form and undercroft, colonnades and loggia; ~~and~~
- eOriginal materials including glazed ceramic tiles, glazing and rough face concrete blockwork.

Later alterations are not significant.

How it is significant?

Cowan House at 457-469 Little Collins Street is of historical, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

Cowan House, designed by *E & G Kolle & Associates*, and opened in 1969, is historically significant for the evidence it provides of postwar development and rapid growth in Melbourne of corporate architecture of the 1950s-70s. Located in the financial and legal precinct in the western part of the city, it reflects the expansion of large national and international companies opting for construction and naming rights of new city office buildings as a form of promotion and fund investment. Constructed for the Melbourne-based subsidiary of English real estate and investment company Capital & Counties

(Australia) Pty Ltd, occupants from 1969-c1983, the building evidences the significant investment made in city building after World War Two by overseas companies. (Criterion A)

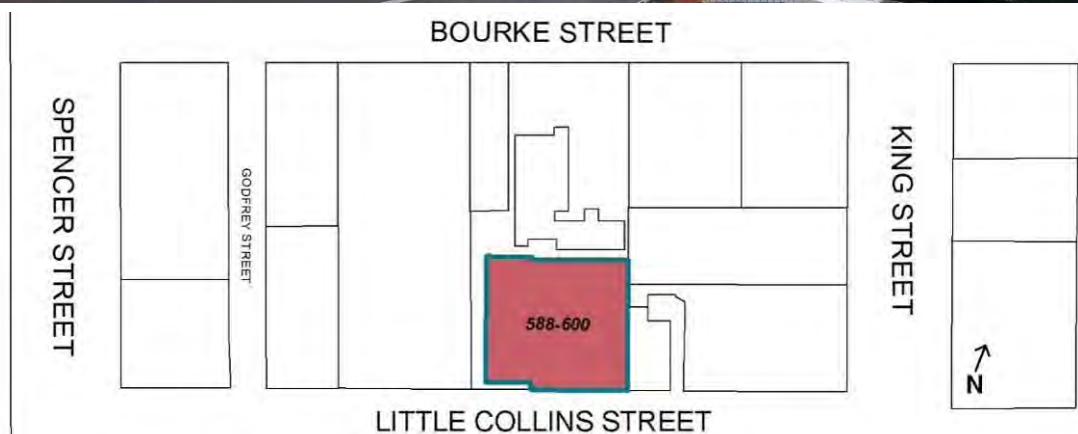
Cowan House is significant as a highly intact example of postwar commercial development in central Melbourne in the Post-War Modernist style that characterised this new wave of development. These buildings represented the new modernism in their modular, industrial Bauhaus inspired aesthetic and incorporated features such as consistent access to daylight and open floor plans to meet new standards for commercial office accommodation. The building exhibits key attributes of the Post-War Modernist style that characterised this wave of development, including concrete post and slab construction, a non-loadbearing precast concrete panel façade with a repetitive modular geometry and a street level undercroft and colonnade which wraps around two sides of the building. Cowan House is also representative of the early wave of high-rise commercial buildings constructed following the abolition of the 40 metre (132 foot) height limit for buildings in the city centre. The building is notable for its incorporation of a colonnade and loggia to the Gurners Lane frontage. (Criterion D)

Cowan House is aesthetically significant as a highly intact example of the later postwar development in curtain wall design during the 1960s, where a mix of materials was utilised to create a greater modularity and three-dimensional quality to the facades. Its aesthetic significance resides in the fine attention to detail on all four elevations and for the variety of materials used, of differing colours and textures including precast concrete panels, glazed ceramic wall tiles and rough-cast concrete blockwork, with each elevation being well considered and detailed. (Criterion E)

Primary source

~~[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\)](#)~~[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\) \(updated March 2022\)](#)

SITE NAME	Stella Maris Seafarer's Centre (Not included in a Heritage Overlay – see Addendum in Volume 1)
STREET ADDRESS	588-600 Little Collins Street, Melbourne
PROPERTY ID	105947



SURVEY DATE: October 2018

SURVEY BY: Context

HERITAGE INVENTORY

H7822-1575

EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY

No

PLACE TYPE

Individual Heritage Place

PROPOSED CATEGORY

Significant

DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:

A K Lines, MacFarlane & Marshall (addition)

BUILDER:

Civil & Civic Pty Ltd (erection), John Holland Group

DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:

Postwar Period (1945-1975)

DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:

1972

THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations.	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here.
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
4 Creating a functioning city	4.3 Providing health and welfare services

LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Religious, Schools
1920s	Warehouses
1960s	Warehouses, Club

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Extent of overlay: Refer to map

SUMMARY

The Stella Maris Seafarer's Centre at 588-600 Little Collins Street, Melbourne was built in 1972 and extended in 1981 to provide welfare services to those in the shipping trade. It is associated with the history of Melbourne as a trading port and of the prevailing concerns for the religious, moral and social welfare of people in the shipping trade. The site is adjacent to the St Augustine's Church and continues the provision of religious, moral and social services to seafarers begun by the Church in the mid-nineteenth century.

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

Melbourne as a trading port

In the first years of settlement boats and ships were moored on the Yarra between Queen Street and William Street. This became known as Queen's Wharf. Bluestone warehouses were erected close by as well as a customs house (1841) and market square (1847) (*Melbourne's Golden Mile* 2001). In the 1840s Captain George Ward Cole built a private wharf between King and Spencer Streets (Barnard 2008:15). Little survives of these early wharves. Other ports were established further afield at Williamstown and Sandridge (Port Melbourne). Shipping news was relayed at Flagstaff Hill, as a rise on the western side of the township that commanded a fine view of the bay. Although sited some distance from the open sea, Melbourne was connected to major shipping routes, and hence to world markets, via the short access route provided by the Yarra.

By the 1880s, Melbourne had grown from being a small settlement serving pastoral interests to a major international port. Coode Canal, which was formed in 1886, altered the course of the Yarra to provide a shorter and more direct passage for shipping. This work involved the removal of the bend in the river known as Fishermen's Bend (Presland 2001:19). Dry docks were built on the reclaimed site of the drained West Melbourne Swamp ('Down by the Docks', Davison and McConville 1991:108). With the completion of Victoria Dock in 1892 Melbourne continued to develop as a busy international port.

Accommodation for sailors and seamen was provided as various lodging houses and hotels and also at the Sailors' and Seamen's Home, Flinders Street. Buildings close to Flinders Street and Flinders Lane also accommodated shipping agents.

The Yarra and the docks west of Swanston Street were in essence the 'lifeline' of the city, in providing port facilities and in defining the city's siting. Yet until recently the city of Melbourne turned its back both on the river south of Flinders Street, and also on the docks.

Providing health and welfare services in the postwar period

Health, welfare and education services were historically established in Melbourne's city centre. The Stella Maris Seafarer's Centre at 588-600 Little Collins Street (1972-73) was one of many charities established as part of the Catholic Church's official missionary work to provide pastoral care, services and support for seafarers.

The Pharmaceutical Guild, established in Victoria in 1928 to ensure the quality of medicines and to establish a uniform scale of wages for pharmaceutical assistants, constructed a building at 18-22 Francis Street in 1954 to a design by Cowper, Murphy and Appleford. Optometrists, Coles and Garrard, established an office building and consulting rooms at 376 Bourke Street in 1957 to a design by architects Meldrum and Noad.

The Queen Victoria Hospital, established in La Trobe Street in 1896 as the first women's hospital in Victoria, moved to 210 Lonsdale Street in 1946. Its primary aim was to be a hospital 'For Women, By Women'. By 1965 it became the new Monash University's teaching hospital for gynaecology, obstetrics and paediatrics and changed from treating solely female patients to being a 'family hospital'. Renamed the Queen Victoria Medical Centre in 1977, it relocated to the Monash Medical Centre at Clayton in 1989 (Russell 2008).

Stella Maris

The Stella Maris is a global organisation established by the Catholic Church as part of its global outreach to seafarers. A seaman's institute was established in Melbourne around 1931, initially as part of the St Vincent de Paul Society (founded in Melbourne in 1854 at St Francis' Church in Lonsdale Street) and then as a separate organisation in 1960. Archbishop Mannix (Archbishop of Melbourne 1917-63) was instrumental in the founding of the institute in 1931 (SMSC 2018). In 1934, women from the Central Telephone Exchange formed a group to help care for seafarers and became known as the Stella Maris Ladies Auxiliary. In 1946, Les Royal carried on the care of visiting seafarers in Melbourne (SMSC 2018).

Stella Maris is closely linked to the Apostleship of the Sea which was formed in England out of the Apostolate of Prayer. The Apostolate of Prayer first posted devotional magazines and books to 12 ships, and with the Society of St Vincent de Paul commenced visiting seafarers in three British ports in 1893. Catholic seafarer's centres were established in other countries progressively and these activities gained formal recognition by Pope Pius XI in 1922. He encouraged the Apostleship of the Sea to extend its mission to the oceans and shores of all the hemispheres (ASA 2018; SMSC 2018).

The Apostleship of the Sea was formally established in Melbourne 1960 with the appointment of Fr Kevin Quinlan as the first full-time Port Chaplain. He oversaw the integration of the work of the International Apostleship of the Sea in the Melbourne Port and formed the Stella Maris as a separate organisation in Melbourne (SMSC 2018). As requested by the Commission of Public Health, Fr Quinlan clarified the function and the purpose of the Stella Maris club as follows:

1. *The Club is a worldwide Roman Catholic organisation, functioning in every major port and it is responsible to the Archdiocese of Melbourne.*
2. *It is a private facility, where admission is restricted to Club members.*
3. *Club members themselves will provide the necessary catering, serving and cleaning.*
4. *The general public will not be permitted to use the club facilities (PROV VPRS 7882/P1 unit 2017).*

Today, the Stella Maris Seafarer's Centre in Melbourne, which continues to use the subject building, is one of 353 centres worldwide established as part of the Catholic Church's official missionary work to provide pastoral care, services and support for seafaring people (SMSC 2018).

Stella Maris seeks to meet the spiritual, social and material needs seafarers –regardless of nationality, ethnicity, faith, gender or social standing. The Centre offers a range of practical services including a ship visitor who assists ships' crew with various tasks. It also provides chaplaincy services, bus transport to and from the docks, and a place in which 'seafarers are provided with an opportunity to communicate with family and loved ones, relax away from their work and living environment, and equip themselves with basic necessities' (SMSC 2018).

SITE HISTORY

The land at 588-600 Little Collins Street, Melbourne, is part of Crown Land Block 16A, the block bound by Bourke, Little Collins, Spencer and King streets, which was originally reserved for public

buildings in Robert Hoddle's 1837 town grid plan (Hoddle 1837). A portion of Block 16A, comprising the subject land, was granted to the Roman Catholic Church. The site is to the south of and adjoins the 1867 St Augustine's Church. This church is recognised as being historically significant for its long association through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with many national groups and through its mission to provide welfare support to seafarers and others engaged in port activities, a service now provided separately through the Stella Maris Centre located to the immediate south (VHD report for H0002). Today, an anchor and plaque in the garden of St Augustine's Church reflects the link to Melbourne's early port life (Hermes record for 'St Augustine's Church'; Swain 2008b).

By c1882 it appears the land at 588-600 Little Collins Street had been separated from St Augustine's Church and had been developed with private warehousing facilities. Up until the early 1930s, T Warr & Co operated free stores at the premises (S&Mc 1882; Mahlsted Map section 1, no 23, 1910 & 1925; S&Mc 1930). By the early 1930s and up until the early 1960s, one- and two-storey warehouses were used by shipping and importing companies (Cooke 1882; S&Mc 1930-60). These premises were vacated by the mid-1960s, possibly due to the decline of port activities in the city's southwest, which once comprised merchants, free stores and shipping businesses (S&Mc 1950, 1955, 1960 & 1965).

Stella Maris Seafarer's Centre

In the late 1960s, the site at 588-600 Little Collins Street was purchased by Archbishop Knox as a gift to Fr Kevin Quinlan, who was appointed the first full-time Port Chaplain in 1960. Fr Quinlan integrated the work of the International Apostleship of the Sea in Melbourne Port and formed the Stella Maris entity in Melbourne (SMSC 2018). The Stella Maris Seafarer's Centre (then known as Stella Maris Centre for Seafarers) was established in the former warehouse buildings that existed on the site (S&Mc 1970; Age 4 December 1969:17).

Plans for a new building for the Stella Maris Seafarer's Centre were in hand by the end of the 1960s. In addition to 40 single-size rooms, five family rooms were planned to provide accommodation for families of seafarers, who were often unable to visit their homes in the country or interstate due to the quick turnaround of ships. To raise money for the construction and running of the building, a fete was held at the centre in December 1969 (Age 4 December 1969:17).

In June 1972, a building application was lodged with the City of Melbourne to build a new two-storey 'non-residential' club building to replace the old warehouses on site. The cost of erection of the reinforced concrete building was \$175,000 (MBAI). The building contractors were Civil & Civic Pty Ltd at 437 St Kilda Road, Melbourne, working on behalf of the Roman Catholic Trusts' Corporation for the Diocese of Melbourne (PROV VPRS 7882/P1 unit 2017). Whether there was an architect involved in the initial building plan is not able to be confirmed.

It appears that the Stella Maris Centre building was initially constructed as a non-residential club and comprised a lounge, a small chapel with chaplain's room, a bar, a kitchen and dining space, a games room and other smaller storage rooms. Club facilities were provided on the first floor, with the ground floor area on either side of the entrance lobby serving predominantly as car parks (PROV VPRS 7882/P1 unit 2017). The newly finished club building was depicted in the Mahlstedt Fire Survey Plan published of 1948 (amended post-1972). According to the plan, the ground floor car park was finished with bituminous paving, and the upper level comprised a concrete steel deck. It appears that the west elevation was treated as a curtain wall (see Figure 1). In December 1974, a conditional

licence for selling bottles of liquor was granted to the first-floor premises of the Stella Maris Centre building (Age 11 December 1974:18).

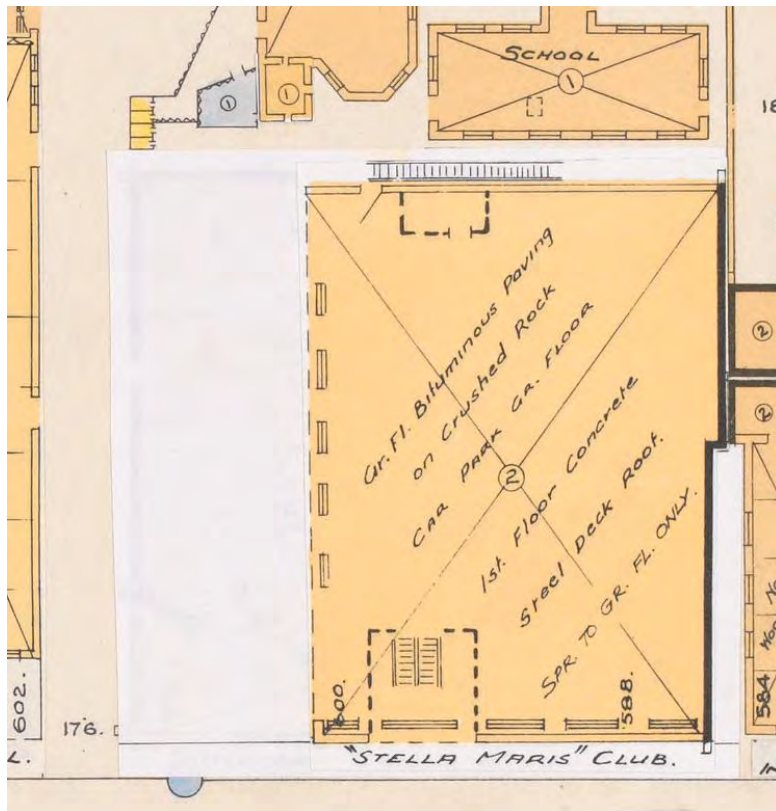


Figure 1. Detail of the Mahlstedt Fire Survey Plan showing the new club premises c1972. (Source: Mahlstedt Map section 1, no 23, 1948)

It is likely that the construction of the accommodation at the premises was carried out nine years after the erection of the building, as in May 1981 an application for alterations and additions [for conversion] to a residential club was lodged with the City of Melbourne (MBAI). Architectural and town planning firm, A K Lines, MacFarlane & Marshall, provided the building plans, and the construction was carried out by the John Holland Group (PROV VPRS 7882/P1 unit 2017).

According to the plans prepared in March 1981, five en-suite bedrooms of various sizes and an outdoor terrace with views towards Little Collins Street were added to the northwest corner of the existing building. The west elevation of the extension was to be of face concrete-blockwork. The ground floor was put aside for undercover car parking, with the upper level supported by a cantilevered slab. A separate staircase access to the new residential section was provided on the north elevation (see Figure 2).

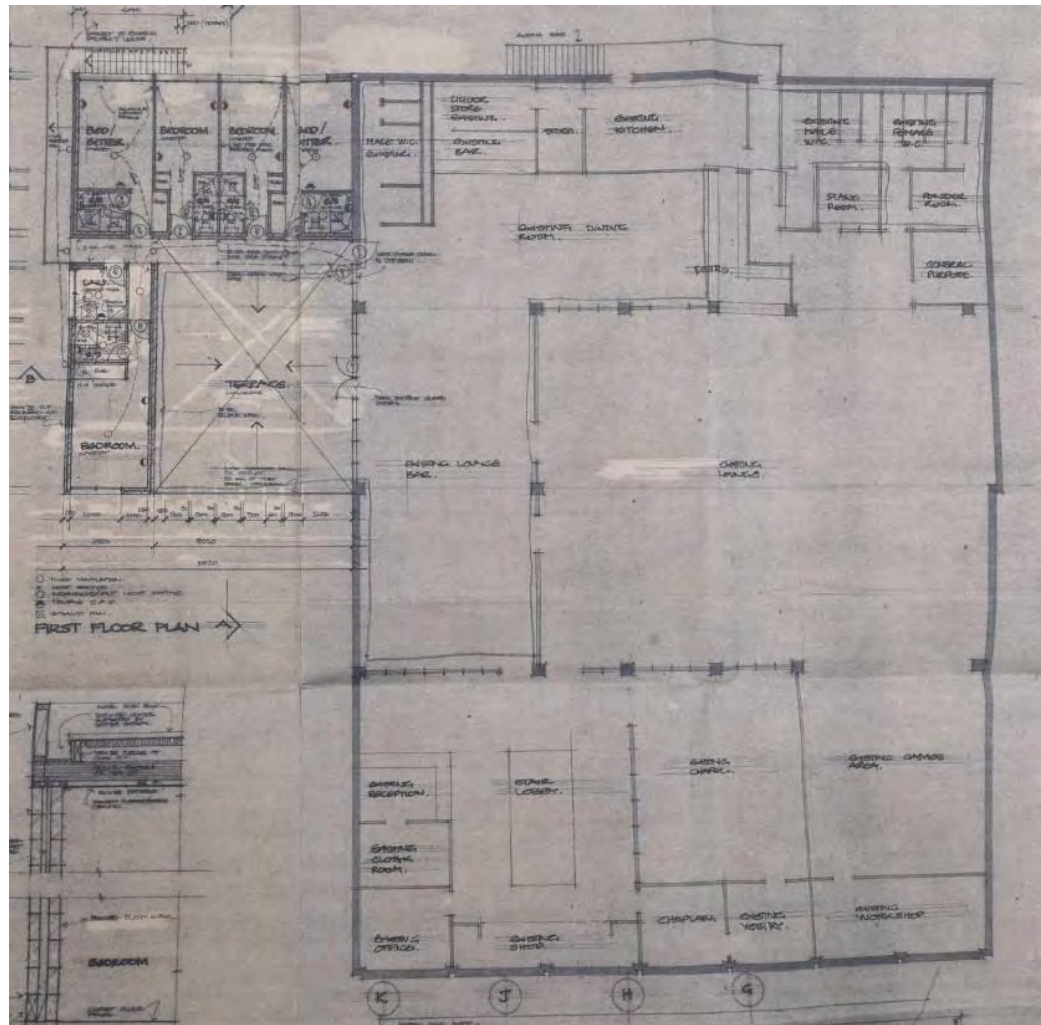


Figure 2. Detail of the building plan prepared for the 1981 alterations to the Stella Maris Club. (Source: PROV VPRS 7882/P1 unit 2017)

By December 1981, three further applications for various alterations and additions to the club building were submitted. The total of the building work carried out in 1981 was \$325,000 (MBAI).

In addition, the upper storey was extended with a rectangular section of concrete masonry, slightly recessed from the original façade. The exact date of the construction of this section is not known. The addition resulted in the open-air terrace section being enclosed by walls on all sides (Nearmap 2017).

Stella Maris Seafarer's Centre continues to provide welfare services to seafarers, operated by a combination of staff, volunteers, ship visitors and assisting priests.

A K Lines, MacFarlane & Marshall, architects and town planners

A biography of the firm A K Lines, MacFarlane & Marshall, prepared by Built Heritage Pty Ltd, is as follows:

The prominent postwar firm of A K Lines, MacFarlane & Marshall grew from the inter-war practice of Albert Keith Lines (1897-1981), whose career began before 1916 as an articled pupil of Claude Merritt. After wartime service, Lines returned to Melbourne to work for

Morewood & Rogers, a prolific house building firm, for whom he designed and supervised many commercial, retail and residential projects. In 1923, Lines opened his own office and, five years later, took on a teenaged Jessica MacFarlane (1911-95) as an articled pupil. The prestige of the small firm increased during the 1930s with a stream of large-scale residential projects in the prosperous middle-class suburbs of Balwyn, Camberwell and Kew. Several houses (some designed and supervised by MacFarlane) were published in the Australian Home Beautiful. The practice was briefly suspended during the Second World War, but re-opened in 1945 with MacFarlane as a full partner. Three years later, they were joined by Bruce Marshall, ex-RAN, who was himself elevated to partnership in 1952. Although MacFarlane left the office in 1954 (when she married and moved to South Australia), her surname was retained in the firm's title (Built Heritage 2010:135).

Much of the subsequent output of A K Lines, MacFarlane & Marshall was guided by Bruce Marshall, whose expertise was in larger-scale commercial and industrial work. This new direction was evident in such projects as the factories for Ruston & Hornsby at Dandenong Road, Clayton (1954), and Yakka Overalls Pty Ltd at Ballarat Street, Brunswick (1955). From the late 1950s, the firm also became one of Victoria's leading specialists in the design of municipal offices. This trend had actually begun just before the War, when Lines & Marshall (as it was then known) designed the new Eltham Shire Offices (1941). After restrictions on building activity were relaxed in the 1950s, the firm was commissioned to design a new modern headquarters for the Shire of Benalla (1958-59). For more than three decades thence, the provision of council offices and related municipal buildings formed the mainstay for the office of A K Lines, MacFarlane & Marshall, with notable examples being built at Oakleigh (1962), Myrtleford (1967), Ringwood (1970) and elsewhere (Built Heritage 2010:135).

Albert Lines retired in 1967, but his firm continued, and remains in operation to this day (Built Heritage 2010:135).

Catholic Church and Stella Maris Seafarer's Centre

The site of the Stella Maris Seafarer's Centre is closely associated with the Catholic Church in Melbourne and has offered a dedicated service to seafarers arriving in Melbourne port since at least 1960. Prior to that a Catholic mission to seafarers, and a seafarers' centre at 546 Flinders Lane, operated through the St Vincent de Paul Society. This centre was close to the river and port.

The Stella Maris Centre was built through donations and fund-raising efforts of volunteers and has been and continues to provide services to seafarers through a team of paid staff and volunteers.

The community of Stella Maris is those who provide services to seafarers and the seafarers themselves who are assisted here. The Stella Maris community is distinguished by the shared service offered within a Catholic mission framework.

The Stella Maris community has a direct association with the subject site, having contributed to its construction and running for more than 45 years. The association is continuing.

588-600 Little Collins Street is one of more than 45 centres across Australia that offered dedicated services to seafarers. The Stella Maris Seafarer's Centre is the focus of efforts to support seafarers by the Catholic Church.

The Stella Maris Seafarer's Centre and the site at 588-600 Little Collins Street has a long-standing association with a community of Catholic people dedicated to supporting the needs of seafarers and more directly with its members. As a pivotal place for the community's collective socialisation and welfare services, the Stella Maris Centre is important for the community's sense of identity, a sense of ownership and pride in the Centre as a place and the services offered.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Stella Maris Seafarer's Centre at 588-600 Little Collins Street, Melbourne is located on the northern side of the street between King Street and Spencer Street. It was built on land, adjacent to the rear of St Augustine's Church, that was gifted to the Stella Maris Association by Archbishop Knox in the late 1960s. The current building was completed in 1973. The building is utilitarian in detail, with slight brutalist overtones, but otherwise without any strong expression of a particular architectural style. The two-storey building is of post and beam concrete construction with a flat steel deck roof.

Facing Little Collins Street, starting at its western end the first third of the building is set back from the street line creating a small courtyard space. With open car spaces underneath a large concrete lintel supported by two columns supports the painted concrete block walls above. At the first-floor level five aluminium framed windows sit below a simple boxed eave with overhang. This section of the building was a later addition post 1981.

The remaining two-thirds of the building runs along the front property line of the site. Utilising concrete post and beam construction the street facing southern elevation is divided into seven evenly spaced modules. From the eastern end, at the ground level, the first three modules are infilled with decorative concrete panels concealing car parking behind. The fourth module is left open providing car access to the parking under the building. The fourth and fifth modules are combined and frame a recessed glazed timber framed entry to the building. A simple mild steel framed security screen runs along the property line. These elements appear original or early. The last two modules are infilled with the same decorative concrete panels as used in the first three modules.

At the first-floor level seven evenly spaced concrete panels are set slightly proud of the post and beam construction allowing the vertical lines of the construction to be read. Above each panel is an aluminium framed clerestory window. Divided into four, the end panes are fitted with awning hung sashes. Running across the top of the windows a deep concrete beam acts as a simple unadorned parapet to the building.

A drive runs along the western boundary accessing open car spaces under the building. The building's western elevation facing the side driveway is utilitarian in detail. A first-floor level sits above the carpark below and has a raised walkway running along its length.

INTEGRITY

Stella Maris Seafarer's Centre at 588-600 Little Collins Street is a building constructed in two halves, with the eastern section built in 1973 and the western, recessed portion completed post 1981. Both demonstrate a high level of integrity with their built and roof forms, original fenestrations and windows intact. The 1970s portion demonstrates a high level of integrity at street level with the original

perforated concrete screens and entrance doors and security screen extant. The post 1981 addition consolidates and extends the use by the centre.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Established with support from the Roman Catholic Church, the Stella Maris Seafarer's Centre can be compared to other buildings in the City of Melbourne that are:

- associated with Melbourne's history as a trading port; and
- associated with the provision of welfare; or
- associated with a use for a particular social, cultural or spiritual group.

Associated with Melbourne's history as a trading port and the provision of welfare

The following buildings are comparable to the Stella Maris Centre as buildings associated with Melbourne's history as a trading port and with the provision of welfare. The images and descriptions are provided by CoM Maps unless stated otherwise, with images dating from c2000 or later.

Missions to Seafarers, 717 Flinders Street, 1937 (VHR H1496; HO650)

Of British origin, the first Anglican Seamen's Mission was established in Bristol in 1837. The first Australian branch was started in 1856 by Rev. Kerr Johnston, and operated from a hulk in Hobson's Bay, later moving to buildings in Williamstown, Port Melbourne and then Siddeley Street. A new Anglican Mission to Seamen was designed in 1916 by architect Walter Richmond Butler, to replace the Siddeley Street premises which had been resumed by the Harbour Trust for wharf extensions. It was designed in the Spanish Mission architectural style. The building has a long association with the Missions to Seamen (now Mission to Seafarers) and the provision of welfare services and space for recreation to assist those working in the shipping trade.



Figure 3. 717 Flinders Street, built in 1937.

YWCA building, 489 Elizabeth Street, 1939 & 1975 (Significant in HO1125 Elizabeth Street Precinct)

The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), an organisation with a mission to nurture the physical and spiritual well-being of young women, but which existed outside of mainstream established religious institutions. A building was constructed in 1939 but has been rebuilt in 1975.



Figure 4. 489 Elizabeth Street, built in 1974.

Associations with use for social purposes

The following buildings are comparable to the Stella Maris Centre as buildings associated with a particular social, cultural or spiritual group.

Lyceum Club, 2-18 Ridgeway Place, 1959 (Interim HO1285 – Recommended as individually significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review)

2-18 Ridgeway Place is built in 1959 to a design by architect Ellison Harvie for the Lyceum Club. The Lyceum Club is significant as the largest and most important club for professional women in Victoria, having been formally established in Melbourne in 1912 to provide a place of retreat, meeting and discussion for professional and retired women. It is significant for its pioneering role in furthering the status of women within the professional sphere dominated by men at the time. The Lyceum Club is of local social significance for its strong and enduring association with the organisation and its membership.



Figure 5. 2-18 Ridgeway Place, built in 1959. (Source: Context 2017)

As an organisation focused on the religious, moral and social welfare of those in the shipping trade and with a shared history in relation to Melbourne as a trading port, the Stella Maris Seafarer's Centre is comparable historically to the Missions to Seafarers at 717 Flinders Street (located outside the Hoddle Grid). Established by the Anglican Church in Melbourne in 1856 (moving to the Flinders Street

site in 1916-17), the Missions to Seafarers is another example of only two such organisations currently in operation near the site of former Port of Melbourne.

For its strong and enduring association and use for social purposes, the subject building has some similarities to the Lyceum Club. As postwar private clubs, both examples convey a deep sense of ownership/stewardship and/or connectedness to the place or object of the corresponding community, being a place of importance to this community's sense identity, and as a place that continues to provide welfare services for that community.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓ **CRITERION A**
Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).

CRITERION B
Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).

CRITERION C
Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).

CRITERION D
Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).

CRITERION E
Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).

CRITERION F
Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)

✓ **CRITERION G**
Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).

CRITERION H
Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-3)	No
TO BE INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

OTHER

N/A

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PREVIOUS STUDIES

**Central Activities District
Conservation Study 1985** Ungraded

**Central City Heritage
Review 1993** Ungraded

**Review of Heritage
overlay listings in the
CBD 2002** Ungraded

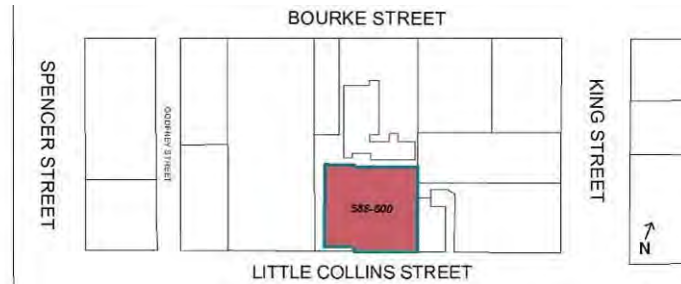
**Central City Heritage
Review 2011** Ungraded

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Stella Maris Seafarer's Centre



PS ref no: [HOXXXXN/A](#)



What is significant?

Stella Maris Seafarer's Centre at 588-600 Little Collins Street, Melbourne, a postwar club building built in 1972 and extended in 1981, ~~is significant.~~

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- ~~Early building form;~~
- ~~The 1981 additions that consolidated and extended the use by Stella Maris; and~~
- ~~The building's use as Stella Maris Seafarer's Centre.~~

How it is significant?

The Stella Maris Seafarer's Centre at 588-600 Little Collins Street is of historical and social significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

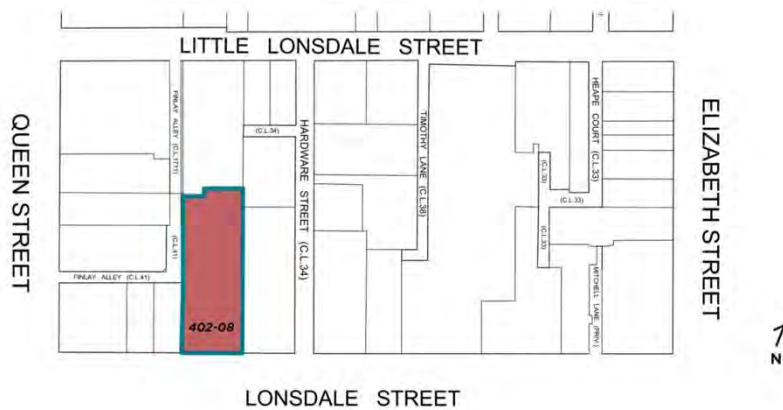
The Stella Maris Seafarer's Centre is historically significant for the tangible evidence it provides of part of the history of Melbourne as a trading port, and of the prevailing concerns for the religious, moral and social welfare of people in the shipping trade. The place has a long association with the adjoining St Augustine's Church through its role from the late 1960s in continuing the Catholic Church's official missionary work to provide pastoral care, services and support for seafaring people, begun by the Church in the mid-nineteenth century. It is also important for its links to St Augustine's Church (631-653 Bourke Street) built in 1867, one of Melbourne's oldest Catholic churches, and the associated St Vincent de Paul Society, whose members were active in caring for seafarers from the late 1880s. (Criterion A)

The Stella Maris Seafarer's Centre is of social significance for its strong association with a Catholic community of lay staff and volunteers, and religious staff, that offer a dedicated mission to seafarers through their work at the Centre and at Melbourne port. The Stella Maris Seafarers' Centre was created through the efforts of this community, and the association is long-standing. The social significance of the Stella Maris Seafarer's Centre is reflected through a strong sense of connection and shared community identity along with a sense of ownership and pride in the Centre as a place and the services offered. (Criterion G)

Primary source

[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\)](#)~~Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)~~ [Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\) \(updated March 2022\)](#)

SITE NAME	Former AMP Building [also known as University City Apartments (current name)]
STREET ADDRESS	402-408 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne
PROPERTY ID	105737



SURVEY DATE: October 2019		SURVEY BY: GJM Heritage	
HERITAGE INVENTORY	No	EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY	No
PLACE TYPE	Individual Heritage Place	PROPOSED CATEGORY	Significant
		FORMER GRADE	Ungraded
DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:	Bates Smart & McCutcheon	BUILDER:	Hansen & Yuncken

DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:	1956-1958
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THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES

Research undertaken in preparing this citation focused on the postwar history of the site and did not address associations with Aboriginal people or organisations

SUB-THEMES

Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here

POSTWAR THEMES

- 1 Shaping the urban landscape
- 3 Building a commercial city

DOMINANT SUB-THEMES

- 1.8 Expressing an architectural style
- 3.2 Buiness and finance

LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE

1890s	Trade, Merchant
1920s	Office, Workshop, Merchant
1960s	Office, Retail

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Extent of overlay: To extent of property boundary

SUMMARY

The 12-storey office building at 402-408 Lonsdale Street was designed by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, under chief designer Hubert Branahan, with architects Jeffrey Howlett and Donald Bailey. The building was constructed as a speculative office building development for owners Australian Mutual Provident (AMP) Society Insurance Co, between 1956 and 1958.

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

Business and finance in the postwar period

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17). Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

SITE HISTORY

The 12-storey office building at 402-408 Lonsdale Street was designed by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, under chief designer Hubert Branahan, with architects Jeffrey Howlett and Donald Bailey (Goad 2004:174). The building was constructed as a speculative development for owners Australian Mutual Provident (AMP) Society Insurance Co, between 1956 and 1958 (*Age*, 25 May 1956:10; *Cross-Section*, Jul 1956:3).

Bates Smart & McCutcheon called for tenders for the demolition of the earlier buildings on the site in April 1956 (*Argus*, 7 Apr 1956:21). The following month, in May 1956, the City of Melbourne received a building permit application for the new project (with an estimated total of £698,000) (BAI). The *Age* reported on the proposed building in May 1956, noting that the AMP Society's 12-storey building would be constructed of reinforced concrete on poured concrete piles, with a height of 40m (132 feet) and provision for parking on the lower and ground floors, while 'special imported double-glazed and sealed window panes' were to be used on the Lonsdale Street façade to reduce noise. The building was to contain 88,000 sq ft of office space, most of which would be available for rent (not occupied by

AMP whose headquarters remained at 425 Collins Street) (*Age*, 25 May 1956:10; *Cross-Section*, Jul 1956:3).

The building was completed in 1958 by builders Hansen & Yuncken (Taylor & Stewart 2001:70; *Cross-Section*, Mar 1958). Goad (2004:174) notes that the building comprises a distinctive façade, maximizing floorspace while exploring ideas of surface modulation of the 'street wall'. Goad comments further on the project as follows:

While not a large or overly prestigious commission, what marked this thirteen-storey building was that it was one of the very few office blocks built in Melbourne during its office-building boom between 1955 and 1958 that was built strictly for investment purposes. The other anomaly was its façade. Unlike virtually all the other office-building commissions in the [Bates Smart & McCutcheon] office, its façade was not a glazed curtain wall. Cross-Section [Mar 1958] described the 'filing cabinet with open drawers' as having its design rationale derived from a minimum-finish maximum floor-space design, and from the fact that the 'open drawers' were in fact bay-windowed offices taking advantage of the building regulations that allowed limited projections over the street. This was indeed true but it also indicated a return in many respects to prewar notions of surface modulation in terms of city building design, and the notion of a 'street wall'.

In 1960 the building was addressed as 406 Lonsdale Street, with various occupants to each of the floors (S&Mc). The building was subdivided into commercial units in 1995 and converted into residential units in 1998 (NTAV 2014:29).

Bates Smart & McCutcheon

Bates, Smart & McCutcheon was formed when Osborn McCutcheon joined the existing firm of Bates & Smart in 1926. Bates & Smart had itself been born out of previous iterations of a firm that could be traced back to Reed & Barnes, making it one of the oldest practices in the country (Goad 2012:72). By the 1960s the firm had become one of Australia's largest architectural firms. It exists today as Bates Smart (Goad 2012:72).

During the 1930s, Bates, Smart & McCutcheon had earned a reputation for designing Georgian-style residences, but also went on to win RVIA awards for their work on the AMP Building in Collins Street (1926-31), Buckley & Nunn Building in Bourke Street (now David Jones, 1933), and the Second Church of Christ Scientist in Camberwell (1936-37).

By the 1950s, Bates, Smart & McCutcheon had become Australia's 'expert' in high-rise office buildings design (Goad 2012:73). Much of their work at this time was large structures with glass curtain walls. In Melbourne this was exemplified by ICI House, which broke the city's existing 132-foot (40m) height limit in 1955-8 (Goad 2012:73). Other work completed by the firm in the 1950s included the first of the Sleigh Buildings at 158-172 Queen Street, Melbourne (1953-55 & 1964), Union House at 43-51 Queen Street, Melbourne (1957) and the AMP Building at 402-408 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne (1956-58).

Bates, Smart & McCutcheon continued to expand into the 1960s and 70s, with its design approach shifting from glazed curtain walls to facades of artificial stone or prefabricated concrete panels. Works in Melbourne during this period included AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, Bourke Street (1965-69) in association with US firm, Skidmore Owings and Merrill; the Guardian Building at 454-456

Collins Street (1960-61); the South British Insurance Company Ltd Building at 155-161 Queen Street (1961-62) and the Methodist Church Centre at 130-134 Little Collins Street (1966-67) with F C Armstrong.

In the 1970s the firm designed the Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street, Melbourne (c1972-75); the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73) and the double tower and plaza complex of Collins Place, Collins Street (1970-80), undertaken in collaboration with international architecture practice, I M Pei. Other notable works by the firm include the large collaborative designs of Melbourne Central with Kisho Kurokawa (1983-92) and Federation Square with Lab Architecture Studio (1997-2002) (Goad 2012:74).



Figure 1. An image of the newly completed building, published in March 1958 (*Cross-Section*, No. 65, March 1958).



Figure 2. The newly completed building in 1958 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/26).



Figure 3. A detail of the facade in 1958 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/27).



Figure 4. Ground level of the building in 1958 and retail tenants (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/24).



Figure 5. The entrance foyer in 1958 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/23).

SITE DESCRIPTION

The Former AMP Building at 402-408 Lonsdale Street is a 12-storey commercial building located on the north side of Lonsdale Street between Queen and Elizabeth streets. Constructed in 1956-58 to a design by architects Bates Smart & McCutcheon, the building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

Rectangular in overall form, the building has a large central light well, with linking section on the western boundary. The building is of reinforced concrete frame construction with brick infill to the side walls.

The main façade incorporates projecting window bays which are located on alternate floor levels, resulting in a complex, modulating surface which contrasts with the simplicity of the popular curtain wall of the period. Projecting window bays are staggered in a regular vertical pattern with broad central projecting bays alternating with pairs of narrow projecting bays at each alternate level. Behind the projecting bays, rendered spandrels and mullions divide the front façade into a vertical tripartite grid, broken only by the broad central projecting bays. The window framing has been altered, however some of the awning windows remain openable.

At the ground level, shopfronts have been inserted flush with the original structure, largely obscuring the pier construction which was originally visible in front of recessed shopfronts. A recessed main entrance to the building remains at the west side.

INTEGRITY

The Former AMP Building at 402-408 Lonsdale Street, including the original form and much of the detailing, remains highly intact to its original construction in 1956-58. Works to the building, including the replacement of all window framing and glazing and the remodelling of previously recessed shopfronts to sit flush with the front façade, has altered the original design.

Overall however, the building retains a high degree of architectural integrity to the Post-War Modernist style in fabric, form and detail. While the building has undergone some alteration, this does not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the place as a fine example of a Post-War Modernist multi-storey commercial building.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The Former AMP Building at 402-408 Lonsdale Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of 1950s multi-storey office building design. The building's front façade, with rendered spandrels and rows of glazing with rendered mullions, which divide the entire façade into a grid-like pattern, can be clearly observed from Lonsdale Street. The front façade is not of typical curtain wall construction, and instead incorporates a regular pattern of projecting window bays which add to the grid-like appearance of the wall. Despite the redesign of the street-level façade and the altered glazing, the façade remains highly intact to its original design.

There are a number of buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the Former AMP Building. These are detailed below.

State-significant places

A comparative example in the City of Melbourne which is located immediately adjacent to the Hoddle Grid is ICI House, 1-4 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1958). This place is included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR H0786).

Locally-significant places

Precinct Heritage Overlay

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from the early postwar period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme. Those from the 1950s that are included in the Heritage Overlay are currently included as part of Heritage Precincts, but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places. These places are:



Former Gilbert Court, 100-104 Collins Street (John A La Gerche, 1954-55) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Hosie's Hotel, 1-5 Elizabeth Street & 288-290 Flinders Street (Mussen McKay & Potter, 1954-55), included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct as a Significant place.



Coates Building, 18-22 Collins Street (John A La Gerche, 1958-59) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Bank of Adelaide Building, 265-269 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton & Lobb, 1959-60) included in HO502 The Block Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Allans Building, 276-278 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton & Lobb, 1956-57) included in HO502 The Block Precinct as a Significant place.

Other Examples

Despite the demolition of many 1950s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the initial period of curtain wall construction in Melbourne and demonstrate similar characteristics to the subject building. The following examples are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places as part of the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review:



Lauren's House, 414-416 Lonsdale Street (Harold Bloom, 1956) (Interim HO1254).



Former Atlas Assurance Building, 404-406 Collins Street (H Garnet Alsop & Partners, 1958-61) (Interim HO1008).



Former London Assurance House, 468-470 Bourke Street (B Evans & Partners, 1960) (Interim HO1006).



Former Batman Automatic Telephone Exchange, 376 Flinders Lane (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1957).



Former Ajax House, 103-105 Queen Street (HD Berry, 1956).



HC Sleigh Building, 166-172 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1953-55).



Coles & Garrard Building, 376-378 Bourke Street (Meldrum & Noad, 1957).



Canton Insurance Building, 43-51 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1957).

Analysis

As a fine and highly intact representative example of its type, the Former AMP Building at 402-408 Lonsdale Street clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey office buildings in the City of Melbourne. Similar to the small number of 1950s buildings presently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme – and a small number of other examples identified throughout the Hoddle Grid and listed above – the Former AMP Building clearly demonstrates this class of place.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓	<p>CRITERION A Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION B Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).</p>
	<p>CRITERION C Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).</p>
✓	<p>CRITERION D Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).</p>
	<p>CRITERION E Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION F Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)</p>
	<p>CRITERION G Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION H Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an Individual Heritage Place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-4)	No
INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

OTHER

N/A

REFERENCES

Contextual History references contained within *City of Melbourne Hoddle Grid Heritage Review: Postwar Thematic Environmental History 1945-1975*

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The Age.

The Argus.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

**Central Activities District
Conservation Study 1985** Ungraded

**Central City Heritage
Review 1993** Ungraded

**Review of Heritage
Overlay Listings in the
CBD 2002** Ungraded

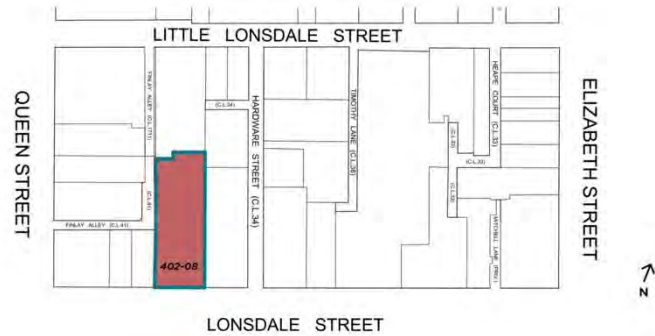
**Central City Heritage
Review 2011** Ungraded

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Former AMP Building

PS ref no: HO1359XXXX



What is significant?

The Former AMP Building at 402-408 Lonsdale Street, a multi-storey office building constructed in 1956-58.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing
- The building's high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations made to the street level façade and window framing and glazing are not significant.

How it is significant?

The Former AMP Building at 402-408 Lonsdale Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

Constructed in 1956-58 to a design by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, the Former AMP Building has a clear association with the postwar building boom which transformed central Melbourne into a modern high-rise city. The design of these commercial buildings from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s – many of which were architect designed – was driven by the commercial demands and the prestige afforded by a dominant city presence (Criterion A).

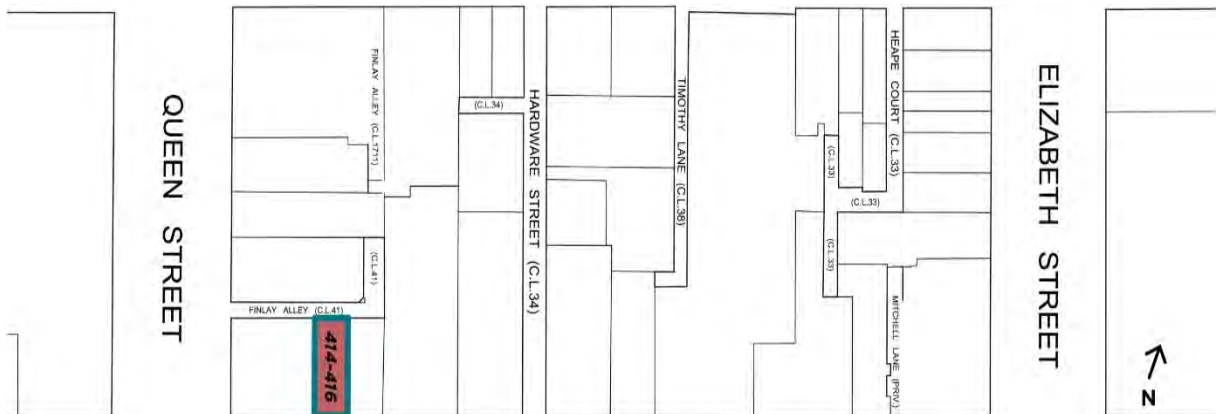
The Former AMP Building is a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building. The building strongly reflects the style which was popular in the 1950s, particularly in central Melbourne. Constructed to the prevailing 40m (132 foot) height limit of the time, the Former AMP Building clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a 1950s structure with a grid-like street

façade. The front façade of alternating rows of glazing and rendered spandrels, and vertical mullions which divide the facade into a grid-like pattern, and the use of materials metal window frames, demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style. The incorporation of a regular pattern of projecting window bays which add to the grid-like appearance of the façade is unusual and distinctive (Criterion D).

Primary source

~~[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\)](#)~~[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\) \(updated March 2022\)](#)

SITE NAME	Laurens House
STREET ADDRESS	414-416 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne
105735	105735



SURVEY DATE: October 2017

SURVEY BY: Context

HERITAGE INVENTORY N/A

EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY No

PLACE TYPE Individual Heritage Place

PROPOSED CATEGORY Significant

DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST: Harold Bloom

EXISTING GRADE C

BUILDER: Not known

DEVELOPMENT PERIOD: Postwar Period (1945-1965)

DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION: 1956

THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations.	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Business and finance

LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Retail
1920s	Retail
1960s	Commercial office

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Extent of overlay: Refer to map

SUMMARY

Laurens House at 414-416 Lonsdale Street, designed by architect Harold Bloom in 1956 is an eight-storey office building featuring an asymmetrical curtain wall facade comprised of a combination of lightweight glazing and ceramic tiles.

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

Business and finance in the postwar period

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17). Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48)

SITE HISTORY

The land at 414-416 Lonsdale Street is part of Crown Allotment 1, Block 29, purchased by Matthew Cantlon in 1837 (DCLS). By the early 1950s, the subject site was occupied by a pair of two-storey shops and dwellings (*Age* 18 June 1953:13).

In June 1953, the pair of brick shops and dwellings at 414-416 Lonsdale Street, which was part of M J Metcalfe's estate, was sold for £7,500 (*Age* 18 June 1953:13). The shops and dwellings were demolished by 1955, and the vacant land was rated at a Net Annual Value (NAV) of £320 in the 1956-57 financial year (RB 1956).

In January 1956, Harold Bloom, architect, called tenders for the erection of a four-storey reinforced concrete office building for George Laurens Pty Ltd, a debt collecting company. The gross floor area of the building was 8,800 square feet (*Age* 25 January 1956:19).

In March 1956, the owner of the building, George Laurens, applied for a permit through the Melbourne City Council to erect an office building on the site (Figure 1). Laurens also expressed his intention to ultimately extend the building to seven storeys in height (VPRS 11201/P/1 UNIT 376).

The quantity surveyor for the building was Crisp & Wolferatan, with the construction contract awarded to F T Jeffrey Pty Ltd at an estimated cost of £47,000 (*Age* 15 August 1956:12). Concrete form work had commenced by August 1956 (*Age* 15 August 1956:12). According to the rate record from the 1957-58 financial year, 414-416 Lonsdale Street was only completed as a four-level office building. The first NAV of the newly finished building was £3,000 (RB 1957).

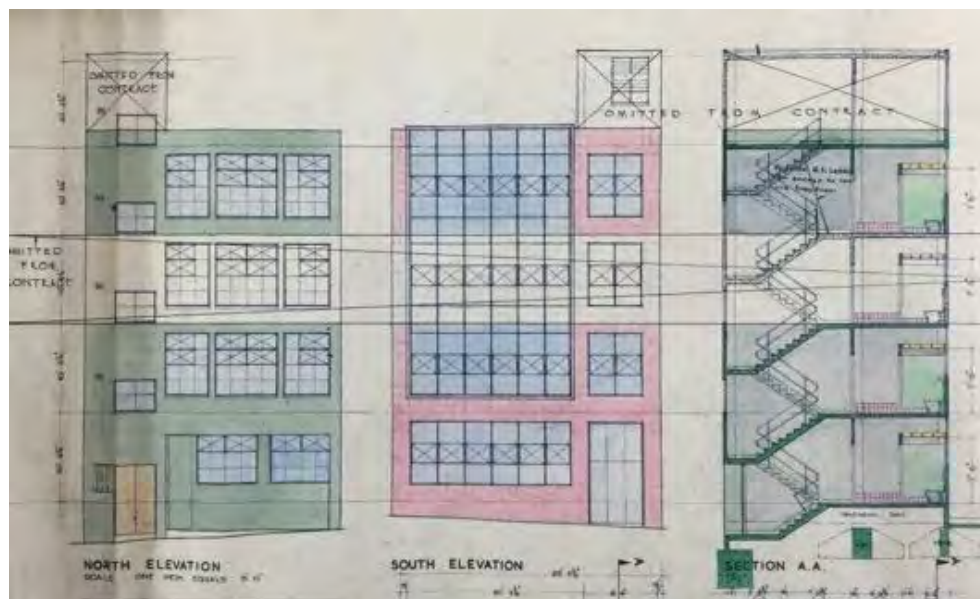


Figure 1. Elevation drawings prepared by Harold Bloom in 1956 (Source: VPRS11201/P/1 UNIT376).

Named after the owner, the building became known as 'Laurens House' (Mahlstedt Map, section 2, no 4a, 1962). The building contained four levels of open-plan office spaces. A loading zone was provided at the rear of the ground floor, which was accessed from the rear service lane, Finlay Lane. A kiosk was installed in the lobby, behind the main entrance. The provision of the 'light court', or a lightwell, is also notable. A small section near the eastern boundary on each floor was recessed towards the west so that the natural light could flow into all levels (Figure 2) (VPRS 11201/P/1 UNIT 376).

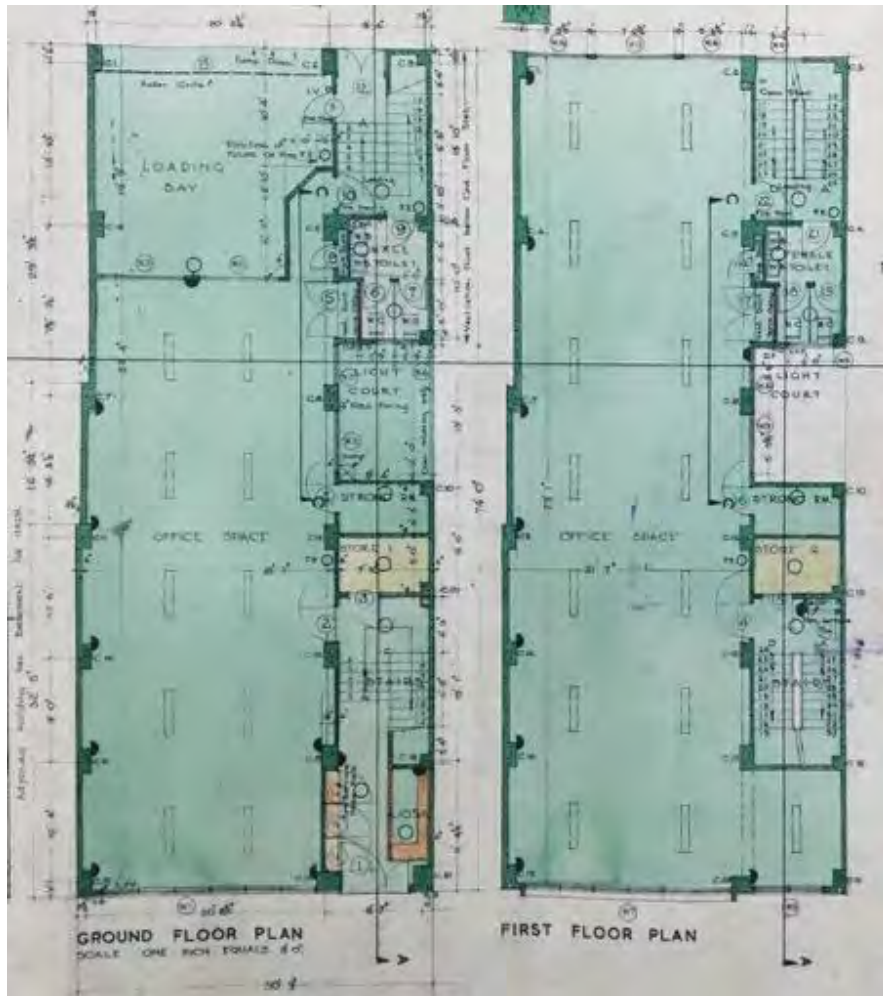


Figure 2. The ground and first floor plans showing the internal arrangements of the office levels. Note the provision of the 'light court' on the eastern boundary. (Source: VPRS 11201/P/1 UNIT 376)

In March 1960, Bloom invited tenders for a four-storey addition to Laurens House. The quantity surveyor was again Crisp & Wolferatan (*Age* 26 March 1960:48). The construction work, which extended the building to eight storeys high, was carried out at a cost of £50,000 and completed by the next financial year. The NAV in 1961 tripled to £9,000 pounds compared to the previous year (RB 1961-2).

In 1962, a Mahlstedt Fire Survey Plan noted the subject building as an eight-storey building with hollow blocks and concrete. At the same time, the storage rooms behind the southern staircase had been turned into a lift (Mahlstedt Map, section 2, no 4a, 1962). The light court was also extended to the entire height of the building (Figure 2, Figure 3).

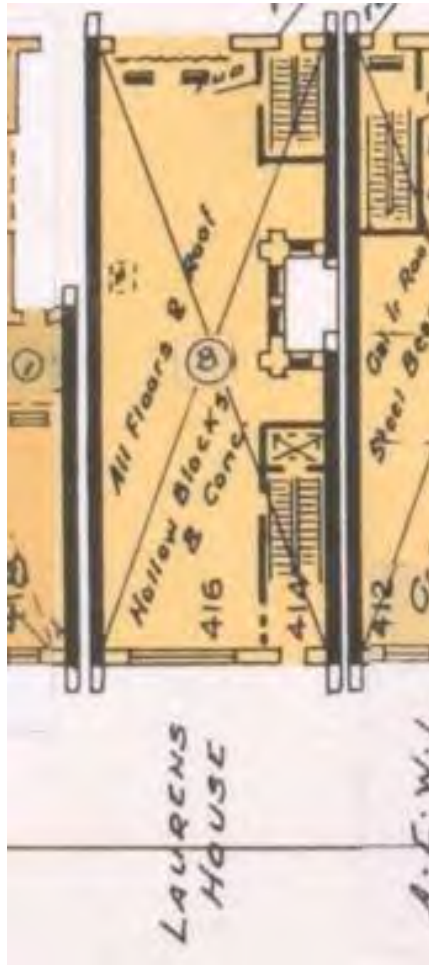


Figure 3. The building footprint in 1962, following the addition of four levels. (Source: Mahlstedt Map, section 1, map no 4a, 1962)

Since its opening in 1956, Laurens House has housed local financing and commercial firms. George Laurens Pty Ltd occupied the front half of the building, while the rear was tenanted by A D Goodman and M Kelly, both solicitors. The lobby kiosk was leased to M Wagman, tobacconist (S&Mc 1960; RB 1960).

Since 1961, the offices of Laurens House have been shared by George Laurence Pty Ltd, A D Goodman, M Kelly, Cameron, Goodman & Co, and a branch of the National Bank of Australia Ltd.

Around 1970, the building was sold to Peak Properties Pty Ltd. Following the change of ownership, the building was vacated by its tenants, except for the National Bank of Australasia (Age 6 April 1961:5; S&Mc 1965, 1970). By the mid-1970s, the building was renamed UTC House. The tenants around this time were Glassop & Son Pty Ltd, bankers; L G Quinn & CO Pty Ltd, accountants; Davies & Collison, patent attorneys; N P Dunn, solicitors; D Ting & Byrne, solicitors; Civil Security Agency, UTC Pty Ltd, travel agency, Myer Southern Stores (buying office); and the National Bank of Australasia Ltd (S&Mc 1974).

The offices were subdivided in 1978. The ground-level shopfront and entrance to number 416 is an addition from 1990. The construction cost at that time was \$20,000 (MBAI).

The building currently contains eight businesses and one shop (CoMMaps).

SITE DESCRIPTION

The building was first constructed as a four-storey building and five years later was extended by an additional four stories, to the same design. The building is distinctively modernist in style. It is distinguished by its cuboid form and asymmetrical curtain walled façade.

The main façade appears as a light weight, transparent glazed section, in contrast to the more solid tiled section to one side, concealing the stairwell to the upper floors.

The glazed section is comprised of repeated horizontal bands combining three rows of windows over a ribbed metal spandrel. Each band corresponds to a floor level within the building. Glazing is arranged in squared aluminium frames, with the middle row operable. Metal spandrel panels match the square dimensions of the windows, resulting in regular squared effect overall. A band of ribbed metal runs along the top edge of the building.

The solid section is clad with square ceramic tiles and inset with windows with the same dimensions as the adjacent glazed section. The ceramic tiles run down to street level where a separate entry is provided for access to the upper floors.

INTEGRITY

The upper façade of the building retains a high level of integrity. The shop front has been altered and minor changes have occurred to the stairwell entry. The current recessed glazed shop front does not appear on the original drawings or maps (Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3), suggesting it was installed sometime after 1962. The additional four storeys were completed using the same design

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The 1950s saw the development of the modern multi-story office building in Melbourne, often built for insurance companies or finance companies. Concrete and steel structural frames provided building support allowing the façade to be clad in a non-load bearing curtain wall. In early examples, curtain walls were typically fully glazed, while in later examples, a greater range of materials were used to achieve variety of expression. A group of buildings built in the mid-1950s to early 1960s combined expansive glazed panels with solid masonry sections to achieve a distinctive aesthetic. They represent a particular stage in the development of this new building type.

State-significant places

A comparative example in the City of Melbourne which is located immediately adjacent to the Hoddle Grid is ICI House, 1-4 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1958). This place is included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR H0786).

Locally-significant places

Precinct Heritage Overlay

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from the early postwar period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme. Those constructed in the 1950s that are included in the Heritage Overlay are currently included as part of Heritage Precincts, but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places. These places are:



Former Gilbert Court, 100-104 Collins Street (John A La Gerche, 1954-55) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Hosie's Hotel, 1-5 Elizabeth Street & 288-290 Flinders Street (Mussen McKay & Potter, 1954-55), included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct as a Significant place.



Coates Building, 18-22 Collins Street (John A La Gerche, 1958-59) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Bank of Adelaide Building, 265-269 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton & Lobb, 1959-60) included in HO502 The Block Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Allans Building, 276-278 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb with Charles N Hollinshed, 1956-57) included in HO502 The Block Precinct as a Significant place.

Other Examples

Despite the demolition of many 1950s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the initial period of curtain wall construction in Melbourne and demonstrate similar characteristics to the subject building. The following examples are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places as part of the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review:



Former Coles and Garrard Building, 376-378 Bourke Street (Meldrum & Noad, 1957).



Former Atlas Assurance Building, 404-406 Collins Street (H Garnet Alsop & Partners, 1958-61) (Interim HO1008).



Former Batman Automatic Telephone Exchange, 376 Flinders Lane (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1957).



Former AMP Building, 402-408 Lonsdale Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1956-59).



Former Ajax House, 103-105 Queen Street (HD Berry, 1956).



HC Sleigh Building, 166-172 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1953-55).



London Assurance House, 468-470 Bourke Street (Bernard Evans, 1960).



Canton Insurance Building, 43-51 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1957).

Analysis

Laurens House at 414-416 Lonsdale Street compares well to the above examples of mid-height curtain walled office buildings from the mid-50s. Laurens House retains a high level of integrity, when compared with the other examples.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓	<p>CRITERION A Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION B Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).</p>
	<p>CRITERION C Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).</p>
✓	<p>CRITERION D Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).</p>
✓	<p>CRITERION E Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION F Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)</p>
	<p>CRITERION G Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION H Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-3)	No
TO BE INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

OTHER

N/A

REFERENCES

Contextual History references contained within City of Melbourne Hoddle Grid Heritage Review: Postwar Thematic Environmental History 1945-1975

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PREVIOUS STUDIES

**Central Activities District
Conservation Study 1985** D

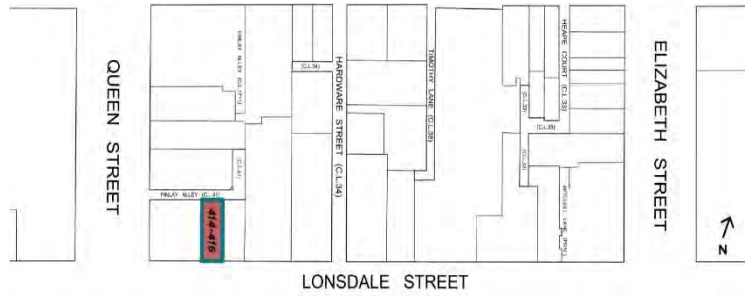
**Central City Heritage
Review 1993** C

**Review of Heritage
overlay listings in the
CBD 2002** Ungraded

**Central City Heritage
Review 2011** Ungraded

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Laurens House

PS ref no: HO 1254XXXX

What is significant?

Laurens House, a modernist office building at 414-416 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, completed in 1956.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing; ~~and~~
- The building's high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations, particularly at street level, are not significant.

How it is significant?

Laurens House at 414-416 Lonsdale Street is of local historical, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

Laurens House built in 1956, is of historic significance for its demonstration of the surge in office development at the time, which reflected not only the adoption of modern architecture, but also widespread economic and political change. From 1949, significant increases occurred in commercial enterprise in Australia in the areas of mining, finance, commerce, and industry, a process facilitated by speculative investment after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947. This contributed to an increase in the development of city offices. (Criterion A)

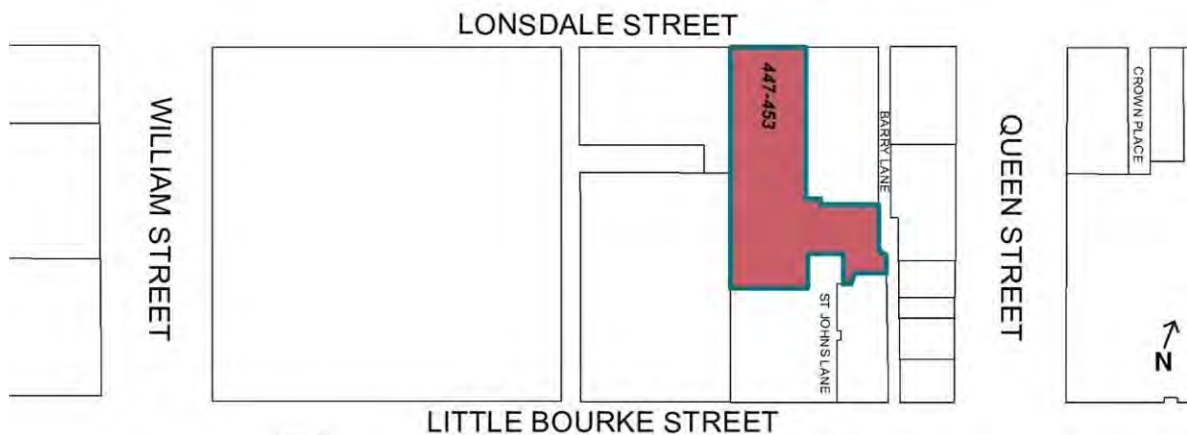
Laurens House is a representative example of an early curtain-walled office building of the early postwar era (1950s-60s). The building is one of a group of commercial buildings built for insurance and finance companies in the city centre during this period. The modernist aesthetic expressed the ambition and corporate image of these companies. (Criterion D)

The eight-storey office building known as Laurens House is distinctively modernist with visual interest derived from the arrangement of building elements across the asymmetrical façade. The lightweight glazed curtain wall contrasts with the more solid masonry elements to one side of the building. This use of solid and void in façade composition distinguishes the early multi-storey curtain wall offices from later examples where glazing was used across the whole façade. Laurens House retains a high level of integrity, comparing favourably with the other examples that have often been refaced or altered significantly at ground level. (Criterion E)

Primary source

[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\)](#)~~Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)~~ [\(updated March 2022\)](#)

SITE NAME	Lonsdale Exchange Building
STREET ADDRESS	447-453 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne
PROPERTY ID	105710



SURVEY DATE: March 2019

SURVEY BY: Context

HERITAGE INVENTORY

N/A

EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY

No

PLACE TYPE

Individual Heritage Place

PROPOSED CATEGORY

Significant

FORMER GRADE

Ungraded

DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:

Commonwealth
Department of Works

BUILDER:

P D C Construction Pty
Limited

DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:

Postwar Period (1945-
1975)

DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:

1969

THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations.	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style 1.9 Beyond the curtain wall 1.10 Brutalism and brickwork
2 Governing, administering and policing the city	2.1 Commonwealth government

LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Residential, Warehouses
1920s	Telegraphic and telephonic
1960s	Telegraphic and telephonic

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Extent of overlay: Refer to map

SUMMARY

The Lonsdale Exchange Building at 447-453 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne was built in 1969 by PDC Construction to a design by the Commonwealth Department of Works. The 15-storey building built in the Post-War Modernist and Brutalist styles replaced an earlier telephone exchange on the site, the Central Telephone Exchange built in 1911 which, by the postwar period could no longer deliver the required services. Ownership of the building was transferred in 1986 to Telecom, which continues to occupy the building today as the Telstra Corporation.

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

Beyond the curtain wall

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding,

screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

Brutalism and brickwork

Brutalism was another architectural style that emerged in commercial building design in Australia as early as 1959, when Harry Seidler used off-form concrete for an eight-storey office block in Ultimo, NSW. That same year, Melbourne architect Kevin Knight (from the office of Oakley & Parkes) prepared plans for the International Order of Oddfellows (IOOF) Building at 380 Russell Street, Melbourne that broke new ground with its banded façade of reinforced concrete spandrels.

Based on the work of modern architecture pioneer Le Corbusier, and largely inspired by his design for the *Unité d'Habitation* in Marseilles (1952), this architectural style became widely accepted internationally. Brutalism incorporated ideas of integrity in expression of materials (especially off-form concrete), structure and function, and often gave rise to dramatic sculptural forms (VHD Hoyts Cinema Centre).

Brutalism became more widespread in central Melbourne in the 1970s. The Mid City Centre at 194-200 Bourke Street (Bogle & Banfield, 1969-70), is a notable example, with its façade of chamfered concrete volumes.

During the 1960s and 70s, face brickwork also made a return with the Houston Building at 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kolle & Associates, 1964-65), the State Savings Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton & Lobb, 1967-68) and the 13-storey Nubrick House at 269-275 William Street by architects Buchan, Laird & Buchan (1972) (NTAV 2014:22).

Commonwealth government

In 1948, the Commonwealth Government compulsorily acquired land on either side of Little Lonsdale Street, between Spring and Exhibition streets. The Commonwealth Centre (now demolished) was subsequently constructed on this block of land (with a street address of 11-39 La Trobe Street) over the period 1958 to the early 1960s. Its construction transformed 'the image of the Federal government in central Melbourne into that of a modern corporation' (Lewis et al 1993:223-24, 255).

As Commonwealth powers increased after World War II, Commonwealth buildings in city centres rose in number. Of particular influence was the transfer in 1942 of income tax revenue from the states to the Commonwealth and the resultant construction of buildings for the Taxation Office, including a building in Bourke Street, which opened in 1958. Marsden writes that the Commonwealth government presence, including the establishment after the war of the new Department of Housing and Construction, reinforced Melbourne's continuing pre-eminence as Australia's financial centre, at least until the 1960s.

A telephone exchange and postal hall building was constructed by the Commonwealth government at 114-120 Russell Street in the period 1948-54. In 1956 the building served as a relay station for the broadcasting of newly arrived television. In 1959, the Commonwealth Arbitration Courts opened at 450 Little Bourke Street, and in 1965 the Reserve Bank of Australia opened at 56-64 Collins Street. Telephone exchanges were also constructed by the Commonwealth Department of Works at 376-382 Flinders Lane (opened in 1957) and at 447-453 Lonsdale Street (1969).

SITE HISTORY

The subject site at 447-453 Lonsdale Street is an irregular sized allotment that forms part of Crown Allotment 12, and some of Crown Allotments 10 and 11, Block 19 ('Plan of Melbourne' 1838). The bulk of the built form, that which has a north-south alignment and frontage to Lonsdale Street, is sited

on Crown Allotment 12, first purchased by Henry Elmes for £185 in 1837 ('Plan of Melbourne' 1838; DCLS 1839). A small rectangular module of the building projects in an east-west alignment off the main built form, partially covering Crown Allotments 10 and 11, with a street frontage to Barry Lane. The whole of Block 19 had no buildings extant in 1852 (Laing 1852, SLV).

By 1888, there was a cluster of three two-storey residential buildings fronting Lonsdale Street on Crown Allotment 12, including a boarding house until 1910 (S&Mc 1895, 1910). Behind these residential buildings, extending back to Little Bourke Street, was an assemblage of one and two-storey utilitarian and industrial buildings. The remainder of the unbuilt land was used as iron rail yards (Mahlstedt Map no 19, 1888).

By 1910 the Victorian cluster of buildings had been demolished (S&Mc 1910). In 1911 the Commonwealth Telephone Exchange, also known as the Central Telephone Exchange, was constructed on the subject land, which was numbered 447-457 Lonsdale Street at that time (see Figure 1, Figure 2) (Butler and Associates 2011:416; S&Mc 1910, 1911).

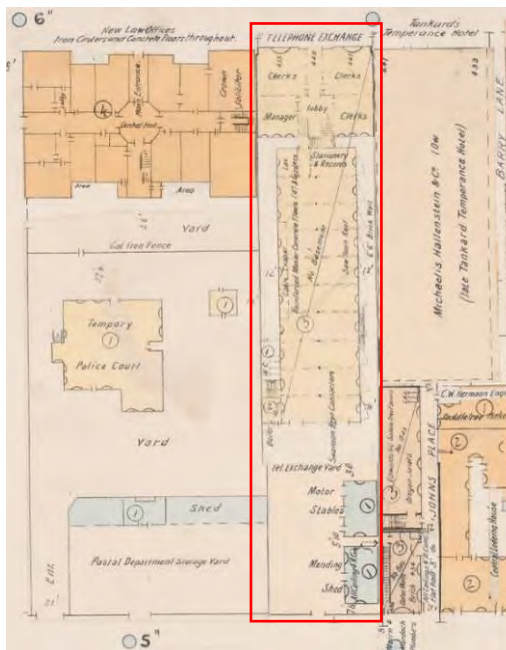


Figure 1. An extract from a plan showing the 1911 Central Telephone Exchange building outlined in red. (Source: Mahlstedt G1910 section 1 no 16)

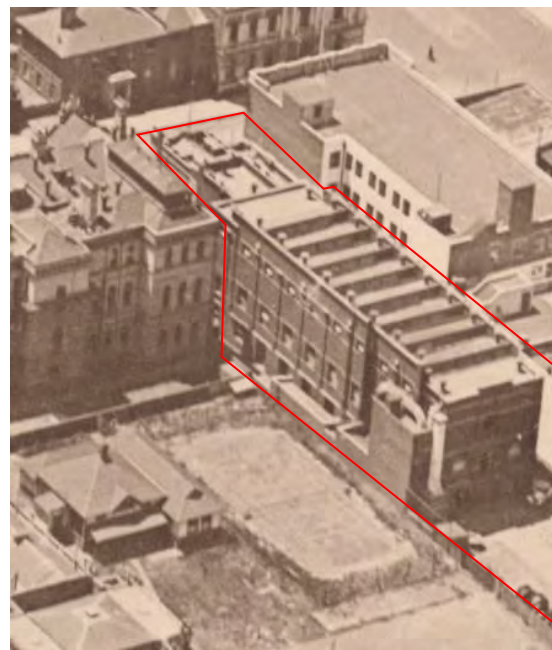


Figure 2. An extract from an aerial photograph showing the Central Telephone Exchange built in 1911, outlined in red. (Source: Airspy 1929, SLV)

The Central Telephone Exchange was a three-storey high masonry building with reinforced Monier concrete floors and a saw-tooth roof in the rear module built by Swanson Bros Contractors). It superseded the Wills Street Telephone Exchange, built in 1884, which had previously serviced the City of Melbourne (Butler and Associates 2011:416). The opening of the new telephone exchange helped to meet the growing demands for subscriptions and to alleviate dependence on the older, and by then outgrown, telephone exchange at Wills Street.

A temporary police court was also erected on the subject site in c1911 and a postal department storage yard was built to the street edge on Little Bourke Street, reflecting the strong civic function of this area of the city which encompassed government, administration and communication services (see Figure 1).

The Central Exchange manual switchboard was installed in the Lonsdale Street Central Telephone Exchange building in 1911 and serviced the whole of the City of Melbourne. Wills Street Exchange lines were transferred incrementally to Lonsdale Street and, by 1912, the new Exchange hosted 4,728-line subscriptions, with a further 3,412 lines remaining to be transferred (*Argus* 1 August 1912:10). In the mid-late 1930s, the switchboard's capacity was fully absorbed, and the City West Automatic Exchange was subsequently established in 1937 (Commonwealth of Australia 1945-46:4). The City West Exchange was built on the allotment behind the Lonsdale Street exchange, fronting Little Bourke Street (the building is still extant and presently operates as the Telstra City West building). Most of the telephone services in the city that lay west of Elizabeth Street were transferred to City West Exchange once it was constructed, while the portion of the city east of Elizabeth Street continued to be serviced by the Lonsdale Street Exchange.

In 1946, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works reported that the manual switchboard at Lonsdale Street had become badly worn and was no longer capable of rendering good service (Commonwealth of Australia 1945-46:4).

Completed in 1969, the Lonsdale Exchange, replaced the former Central Telephone Exchange that had occupied the subject site since 1910 (see Figure 3 and Figure 4). In March 1965 the Commonwealth Department of Works published a notice inviting contractors to register as tenderers for the Lonsdale Telephone Exchange (*Age* 3 March 1965:48). Comprising fourteen upper floors, a ground floor, basement and sub-basement, the Lonsdale Telephone Exchange was to be constructed in steel and concrete with face brickwork externally. It was to cover an area of 2400 square metres and required extensive underpinning of adjoining buildings as part of the process (see Figure 5) (*Sydney Morning Herald* 10 March 1965:36).

PDC Construction carried out the works for a contract to the value of \$6,000,000 (*Age* 16 March 1967:17) The Lonsdale Telephone Exchange was built abutting the City West Telephone Exchange, constructed 1937, which faces Little Bourke Street; the buildings were connected internally by two points (see Figure 3).

Few changes were made to the building after its construction (see Figure 6). Tenders were issued for the installation of a concrete hardstand in 1971, presumably the carpark that fronts Little Bourke Street, and a new services riser in 1990 (*Age* 20 March 1971:62; *Age* 22 December 1990:44). The City of Melbourne building permit card does not record any modifications to the building (MBAI).

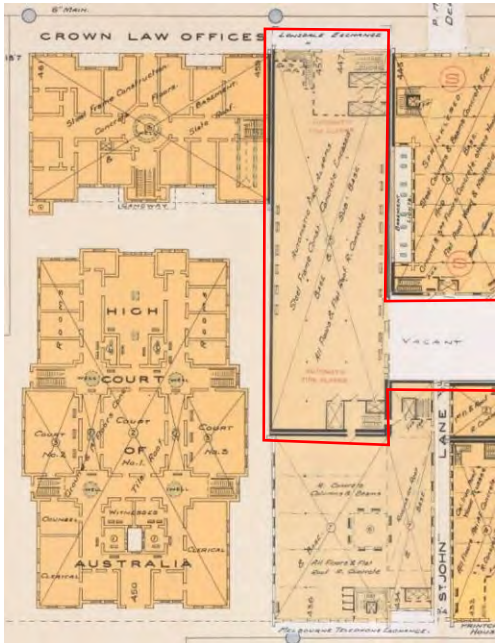


Figure 3. Extract from a survey showing the subject site, outlined in red, and the adjoining City West Telephone Exchange fronting after Little Bourke Street. Note that this survey was amended after 1948. (Source: Mahlstedt 1948 section 1 no 16)



Figure 4. The Lonsdale Telephone Exchange in 1969 after construction was completed. (Source: NAA 1969: series B6295, item: 2157A)



Figure 5. Excavation for the Lonsdale Telephone Exchange showing the back wall of the 1937 City West Telephone Exchange building. (Source: NAA 1966: series B6295, item: 1609B)



Figure 6. The subject building in 1985. (Source: Butler 1984: property key 105711)

By the late 1960s, satellite and microwave technologies had integrated Melbourne's telephones into a global communications system (Healy 2008) and in 1987, Telecom (created in 1975 following the abolition of the Postmasters General Department) announced that it would open a Mobilenet cellular

mobile telephone service, with the Lonsdale Telephone Exchange one of twelve base stations in Victoria to which Mobilenet users could subscribe (*Age* 25 May 1987:35).

It is believed that ownership of the subject building was transferred from the Commonwealth government to Telecom (later Telstra Corporation) in 1986.

The Telstra Corporation presently occupies the whole of the building.

Commonwealth Department of Works, designer

The Commonwealth Department of Works was established in 1901 to look after the creation of public works in the newly federated nation. Although the agency has operated under different titles in its history – it was known as the Department of Works from 1952-73 – it is commonly referred to as the Commonwealth Department of Works (CDW) to distinguish it from state-based agencies. The Department was responsible for the design, construction, alteration and maintenance of Commonwealth buildings and other engineering works. Its offices were located in Melbourne until 1929, when they were transferred to Canberra. A period of intensive works were carried out by the CDW during and immediately after World War Two, as the Department managed the building of essential infrastructure as well as significant postwar planning (Smith 2006). By the early 1970s, the activities of the CDW were slowly declining; its functions were transferred to the Department of Housing & Construction in 1978; then the Department of Transport and Construction in 1982 and from 1987, it was known as Australian Construction Services. The vestiges of the CDW were sold off to an engineering firm in 1997 (Willis 2012).

PDC Construction, builder

P D C Construction built several large-scale buildings for the Commonwealth government in the 1960s. In 1963, for instance, they completed the Commonwealth government printing offices, Canberra, and the Commonwealth Centre, Sydney (since demolished) which, with 19 above-ground floors, was Sydney's largest building at the time, and the second tallest to the AMP Building, Sydney, built 1959 and comprising 26 above-ground floors (Emporis 2019). PDC constructed the National Library, Canberra, concurrent with the construction of the subject building (*Age* 16 March 1967:17).

SITE DESCRIPTION

The Lonsdale Exchange Building at 447-453 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, is a 15-storey face brick building constructed in 1969 in the Post-War Modernist style, which also demonstrates some aspects of the early Brutalist style. Located on the southern side of Lonsdale Street between Queen and William streets, it also has a secondary point of access from Barry Lane.

In plan form the building is an elongated rectangle, with the narrow northern frontage being the main façade to Lonsdale Street, although all four elevations are substantially identical in terms of material and articulation. The internal structure is reinforced concrete, and the facades are horizontal panels of nonloadbearing brown brick cladding laid in stretcher bond that probably reflects the internal structural grid. Each panel is defined by an expressed metal perimeter frame, and on some elevations (especially the northern façade to Lonsdale Street), the panels incorporate a full width horizontal window opening that comprises four individual sashes. The windows appear to be the original aluminium frames, and some modules are infilled with aluminium louvres, also probably original.

At street level, the facade is clad in black granite panels. The building has a wide modern, glazed central entrance with automated doors beneath a large metal ventilation grille. On the eastern side of the main entrance, a large, ornate brass British Coat of Arms is embedded in a recessed granite panel. A Royal Cypher of Queen Elizabeth II is mounted on the western side of the entrance in raised brass lettering. Beneath the cypher is 'Lonsdale Exchange Building 447-457 Lonsdale Street', which is the older address, in the same raised brass lettering.

Part of the building fronts Barry Lane on the eastern elevation which comprises two service entrances and a carpark. Two older buildings, on either side of the service entry, directly abut its eastern wall.

Overall, the building is a simple but refined building characterised by its strong disciplined modularity and the absence of any decorative elements other than the coat of arms and other elements that identify the building for its key role in the Commonwealth communications system. The building does not appear to have undergone any major alterations since its construction in 1969.

INTEGRITY

The Lonsdale Exchange Building is highly intact with very few changes visible to the original or early fabric of the building. The building retains its original built form and scale. The nonloadbearing face brick panels defined by an expressed metal frame and horizontal window openings – some fitted with aluminium sashes or louvres – are also likely to be original. Unusual within the Hoddle Grid, the ground level is also highly intact with the original or early Coat of Arms, Royal Cypher, raised lettering, granite wall cladding and recessed entry with aluminium ventilation louvre extant. The entrance doors are not original. Overall, the building has very high integrity.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The Post-War Modernist style made its appearance in Australia in the mid-1950s, and was the style of choice for new high-rise development in the capital cities. The Lonsdale Telephone Exchange demonstrates the key aspects of the style in its formal modularity unrelieved by any decorative details. However, it also exhibits some characteristics of the Brutalist style in its solid massing with large areas of unbroken surface material. Buildings of this style were often constructed of reinforced concrete frames with off-form concrete or face brick wall fabric. The stripped back aesthetic of Brutalist architecture was particularly well utilised for institutional or industrial buildings where large expanses of glazing were not critical for their interior functionality.

There are a number of buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the Lonsdale Telephone Exchange. These are detailed below.

State-significant places

A small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne have been assessed as being of State-level significance and are included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). These include:

- Total House, 170-90 Russell Street (Bogle & Banfield 1964-65; VHR H2329 & HO1095)
- Former Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-44 Bourke Street (Peter Muller 1966-69)
- Victorian Government Offices, Treasury Reserve Precinct (Yuncken Freeman 1967-68 – outside the Hoddle Grid)

- Eagle House, 473 Bourke Street (Yuncken Freeman 1971-72; VHR H1807 & HO901)
- BHP House, 130-148 William Street (Yuncken Freeman 1969-72; VHR H1699 & HO767).

Locally-significant places

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from this period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme on a permanent basis. Those that are, are generally currently included within Heritage Precincts but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places, as follows:

Precinct Heritage Overlay



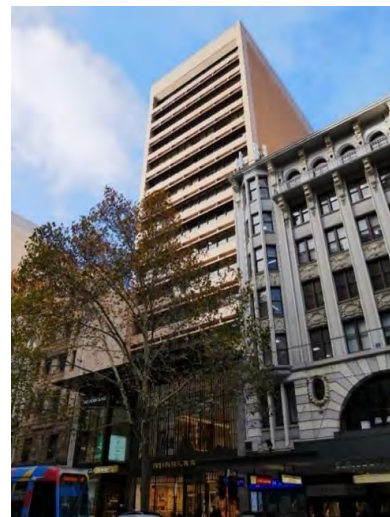
Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street, (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1974) included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct (Non-contributory).



Wales Corner, 221-231 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1964-66) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Swanston Street) Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, 251-257 Collins Street, (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 19741-73 included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Flinders Lane) (Non-contributory).

One individual heritage place recently included in a site-specific Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis is the Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1966) (HO1213):



Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

Other examples

Despite the demolition of many 1960s and 1970s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the advancement of construction techniques from the 1960s through to the mid 1970s and demonstrate the broad range of design approaches of the period. The podiums of the majority of these places have been modified at street level. Examples include:



Former RACV Club, 111-129 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961) (Interim HO1068)



Former Australia Pacific House, 136-144 Exhibition Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1975-78)



Royal Insurance Group Building, 430-442 Collins Street, (Yuncken Freeman, 1965) (Interim HO1010)



Office Building, 516-520 Collins Street (architect unknown, c1974)



Former Guardian Building, 454-456 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1960-61)



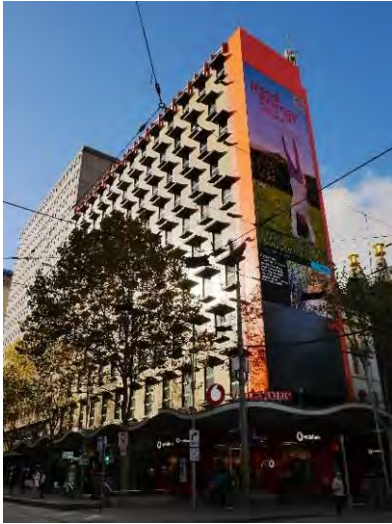
Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building, 155-161 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961-62)



Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



MLA Building, 308-336 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1963)



Royal Mail House, 255-267 Bourke Street (D Graeme Lumsden, 1963)



Former Sleigh Corner Building, 158-164 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1964)



The Former Houston Building, 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kolle & Associates, 1965)



AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street (Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1965-69)



Former Dalgety House, 457-471 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp & Walker, 1966-68)



Former State Saving Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1967-68)



Former Legal & General House, 375-383 Collins Street (B Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking, 1967)



Former AMP Building, 344-350 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1966-68)



Equitable House, 335-349 Little Collins Street (unknown architect, 1968)



Former Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street (Meldrum & Partners with Peddle Thorp Walker, 1968-70)



Former Methodist Church Centre, 130-134 Little Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1966-67)



Cowan House, 457-469 Little Collins Street (E & G Kolle, 1969)



Office Building, 178-188 William Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1972-73)



Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



Former Bryson Centre, 174-192 Exhibition Street (Perrot Lyon Timlock & Kesa, 1970-72)



Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building, 359-373 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, c1972-75)



Nubrick House, 269-275 William Street (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1972)



Former Law Department Building, 221-231 Queen Street (Fischer Group, 1972)



Former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch, 85-91 Queen Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1973)



Former MLC Building, 303-317 Collins Street (Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, c1970-1973)



Office Building, 589-603 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp de Preu, 1973-75)

Exchange Buildings

The following examples are comparable with the Lonsdale Telephone Exchange, being of a similar use, although their style, construction date and scale varies. The images and descriptions below are provided by CoM Maps unless stated otherwise, with images dating from c2000 or later.

Batman Exchange, 376-382 Flinders Lane, 1956-57 (Recommended as individually significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review)

Designed by the Commonwealth Department of Works, the Batman Exchange has an unusual asymmetrical façade treatment with a combination of masonry (brick) with a glass curtain wall section.

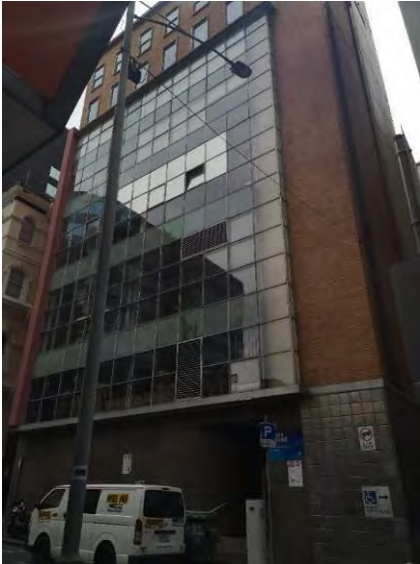


Figure 7. 376-382 Flinders Lane, built in 1956.

Former Russell Street Automatic Telephone Exchange and Postal Building, 114-120 Russell Street, Melbourne, 1948-1954, 1999-2001 (Recommended as individually significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review)

The former Russell Street Automatic Telephone Exchange and Postal Building (now Hero Apartments) at 114-120 Russell Street is an example of a substantial government building designed in the interwar Functionalist style and completed in 1954. It has the strong horizontal emphasis of expressed façade elements and windows, and other characteristics typical of the style, but also demonstrates a number of eclectic and innovative features that are more derivative than typical of the style.



Figure 8. 114-120 Russell Street, built in 1948-1954. (Source: Context 2018)

Telstra City West Exchange Building, 436 Little Bourke Street, Melbourne, 1937 (HO1054)

A seven storey brick purpose built telephone exchange building. Designed by the Commonwealth Government Architect John Smith Murdoch in a Georgian Revival style and built in 1937. It joins another telephone exchange at 447 Lonsdale Street that was built in 1965.



Figure 9. Telstra City West Exchange Building, 436 Little Bourke Street, Melbourne, built in 1937.

Analysis

The Lonsdale Exchange Building at 447-453 Lonsdale Street is an example of a substantial telephone exchange building designed in the postwar period with elements of the Post-War Modernist style while also demonstrating some aspects of the early Brutalist style. It exhibits a number of features that are indicative of its purpose-built functionality – such as the limited number of windows and large unbroken surfaces – making it difficult to compare with other examples. As a specific and unusual building typology, postwar telephone exchange buildings are not represented in the City of Melbourne Heritage Overlay, as such there are no obvious examples for architectural comparison. Other examples of postwar telephone exchanges in the City of Melbourne, also designed by the Commonwealth Department of Works, include the former Russell Street Automatic Telephone Exchange and Postal Building at 114-120 Russell Street and the former Batman Exchange at 376-382 Flinders Lane (both recommended as individually significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review) and the Telstra City West Exchange Building at 436 Little Bourke Street (HO1054). Although altered, the addition to 114-120 Russell Street is sympathetic to the original building and does not detract from appreciation of the original building. 376-382 Flinders Lane and 447-553 Lonsdale Street are both highly intact.

As a type, the three examples are representative of postwar public works and are good examples of the technical and utilitarian application of design for Commonwealth communication services. These are all refined examples of postwar Melbourne buildings that demonstrate some key aspects of the Post-War Modernist style, while incorporating features that express their utilitarian interior functions and a major design aesthetic. The Telstra City West Exchange Building at 436 Little Bourke Street (HO1054) is comparable as a purpose built, government designed exchange but is distinguished by its architectural style and period of construction. It is the only telephone exchange included in the City of Melbourne Heritage Overlay.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

- | | |
|---|--|
| ✓ | <p>CRITERION A
Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).</p> |
| | <p>CRITERION B
Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).</p> |
| | <p>CRITERION C
Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).</p> |
| ✓ | <p>CRITERION D
Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).</p> |
| ✓ | <p>CRITERION E
Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).</p> |
| | <p>CRITERION F
Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)</p> |
| | <p>CRITERION G
Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).</p> |
| | <p>CRITERION H
Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).</p> |
-

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-3)	No
TO BE INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

OTHER

N/A

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PREVIOUS STUDIES

**Central Activities District
Conservation Study 1985** Ungraded

**Central City Heritage
Review 1993** Ungraded

**Review of Heritage
overlay listings in the
CBD 2002** Ungraded

**Central City Heritage
Review 2011** Ungraded

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Lonsdale
Exchange Building

PS ref no: HO1361XXXX



What is significant?

The Lonsdale Exchange Building at 447-453 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, built in 1969 by PDC Construction to a design by the Commonwealth Department of Works is significant.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- [The building's](#) original [external building](#) form and scale;
- [Un](#)Painted face brick cladding and expressed metal perimeter frames, original pattern of fenestration and window openings;
- [Re](#)cessed ground level entry, black granite tiled cladding, British Coat of Arms, Royal Cypher and '*Lonsdale Exchange Building 447-457 Lonsdale Street*' lettering at street level; [and](#);
- Original aluminium frame windows and louvres.
- Later alterations, particularly at street level, are not significant.

How it is significant?

The Lonsdale Exchange Building at 447-453 Lonsdale Street is of historical, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

The Lonsdale Exchange Building is historically significant for its ongoing civic function and association with the longer civic use of the site. From 1911 to the present day, the site has been used for the provision of telephone services to the city, and is located within an area which encompassed government, administration and communication services. Construction of the Lonsdale Telephone Exchange demonstrates the breadth of Commonwealth powers in the decades that followed World War Two, a shift that occurred in the postwar period and resulted in increased construction of buildings in city centres by the Commonwealth Department of Works. As a large-scale purpose-built building completed in 1969, replacing the earlier 1911 exchange building and supplementing other earlier postwar telephone exchanges in the city, it also demonstrates the growth and changes in telecommunications by the mid to late 1960s. (Criterion A)

The Lonsdale Telephone Exchange is significant as a highly intact and refined example of postwar Commonwealth government development in the City of Melbourne. The Lonsdale Exchange Building utilises the Post-War Modernist style that characterised this wave of development, but with aspects of the Brutalist style that are commensurate with its very specific function. It is representative of the modern purpose-built telephone exchange buildings designed by the Commonwealth Department of Works in the 1960s and 1970s to store large technical equipment and switchboards as well as accommodating an expanded workforce. (Criterion D)

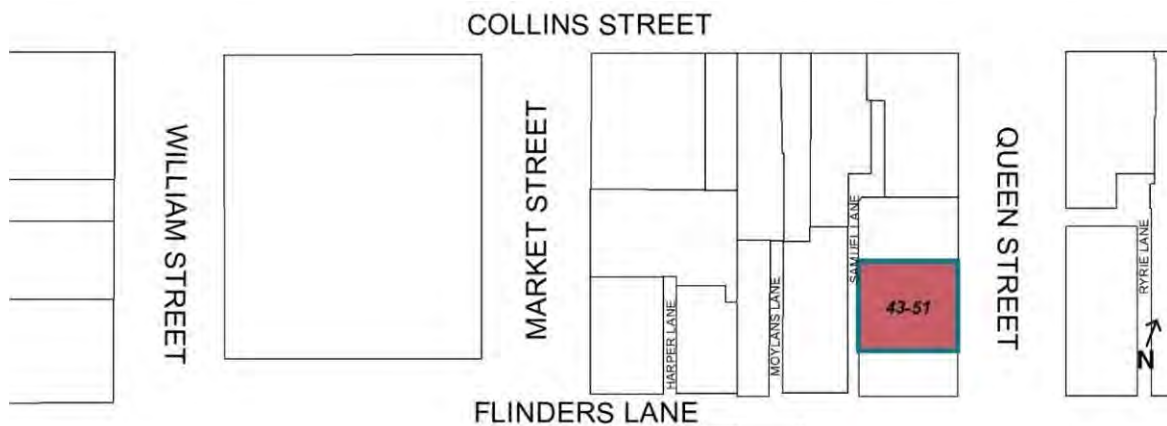
The Lonsdale Exchange Building is aesthetically significant as a well-executed design by the Commonwealth Department of Works. It is a substantial, disciplined, refined and highly intact example of a Post-War Modernist style multi-storey building incorporating features of the Brutalist style, such as large areas of solid masonry walling and a lack of large areas of glazing. These characteristics are overlaid with the repetitive modularity of the Post-War Modernist style. In the subject building, this

external expression of its utilitarian interior functions contributes to its rigid, minimalist design aesthetic.
(Criterion E)

Primary source

[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\)](#)[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\)](#) (updated March 2022)

SITE NAME	Former Union House [also known as Union Insurance of Canton Building and Canton Insurance Building]
STREET ADDRESS	43-51 Queen Street, Melbourne
PROPERTY ID	108062



SURVEY DATE: March 2019

SURVEY BY: Context

HERITAGE INVENTORY N/A

EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY No

PLACE TYPE Individual Heritage Place

PROPOSED CATEGORY Significant

DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST: Bates Smart & McCutcheon

FORMER GRADE C
BUILDER: E A Watts

DEVELOPMENT PERIOD: Postwar Period (1945-1965)

DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION: 1957

THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES

Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations.

SUB-THEMES

Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here

POSTWAR THEMES

1 Shaping the urban landscape

3 Building a commercial city

DOMINANT SUB-THEMES

1.8 Expressing an architectural style

3.2 Business and finance

LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE

1890s

Not able to be determined

1920s

Office

1960s

Office

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Extent of overlay: refer to map

SUMMARY

The former Union House at 43-51 Queen Street is an 11- storey postwar curtain wall commercial office building built in 1957 in the Post-War Modernist style. It was designed by architects Bates Smart & McCutcheon and constructed by builder E A Watts for the international company Union Insurance Society of Canton who occupied the building from 1957-70. The building has been used for commercial offices from that time.

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

Business and finance in the postwar period

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17). Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

SITE HISTORY

Prior to the construction of the subject building at 43-51 Queen Street, the subject site, part of Crown Allotment 10, Block 3, was occupied by a four-storey building named the York Chambers (Mahlstedt Map Section 1, no 18, 1925). York Chambers, a brick building comprising a basement, ground and three upper floors, was auctioned in February 1952. An auction advertisement for the site described its 'valuable position on the west side of Queen Street, south of Collins Street. Situated as it is in the heart of the financial centre of Melbourne, should be of special interest to insurance companies' (*Age* 20 February 1952:10).

Construction of the subject building had started by February 1957 (*Age* 7 February 1957:3). Constructed for the Union Insurance Society of Canton, the building was designed by architects Bates Smart & McCutcheon, and was due to be completed for a budget of £600,000 (*Age* 7 February 1957:3).

The first commercial cargo insurance entity established in China to pay claims in China was the Canton Insurance Society in 1805, formed in Macau by two independent trading houses, Dent & Co and Jardine Matheson & Co. In 1835 Dent left the partnership to set up the Union Insurance Society

of Canton (initially called the China Insurance Company), which moved to Hong Kong in 1842 when the island was ceded to Britain. The society was reorganised into an insurance company along modern lines in 1874 (Swiss Re 2017:6). In its new legal form, the Union expanded rapidly, opening branch offices in London in 1874 and Melbourne in 1883 (UISC 1952:16).

The Union acquired China Traders Insurance Co in 1906, the China Fire Insurance Co in 1916, and the Yangtze Insurance Association in 1925. By 1920 the Union was said to be the largest marine insurance company in the world (UISC 1952:10; Smith & Middleton 1920:194). By 1952, a branch had been established in every major Australian city (UISC 1952:16).

The Union Insurance Society of Canton was acquired by the Guardian Assurance Company in 1967, which was itself acquired by Axa in 1999 (Guardian 2019). Constructed to the height limit of 40.2 metres (132 feet), the building made full use of the 82-foot frontage to Queen Street, however, was purposely constructed to be only 60-foot deep, which allowed for a parking area to the rear (Age 7 February 1957:3; National Trust 2014). The insurance firm intended to take up only three floors of the site, leaving the rest of the building to be leased as offices. A Tom Bass abstract sculpture was placed above the main entrance, which represented the clipper ship symbol of the insurance company. A mosaic mural was installed at ground floor level by Sydney artist Eric Smith. A clock was also to be fixed to the front of the building (see Figure 1, Figure 2 and Figure 3). (Age 7 February 1957:3).



Figure 1. The Union Insurance Society of Canton Ltd building at 43-51 Queen Street in 1970 showing the clock at its southern end (Source: Sievers, 1970 SLV [copyright](#))

The subject building was constructed with precast concrete wall panels and imported coloured glass spandrels. The glass spandrels gave a sense of horizontality to the building (National Trust 2014). As the site was silty, the building required 25-foot piles driven into the ground (Age 7 February 1957:3). The Union Insurance Society of Canton building opened on 15 March 1958 (Age 24 March 1958:11).

In 1958, the architecture magazine *Cross Section* described the building thus:

An unusual sight, a sign of the times, was the simultaneous completion of these neighbouring office blocks in Queen-Street, Melbourne. On the right is the Norwich Union Insurance Society's building, designed by Messrs Yuncken, Freeman Bros, Griffiths & Simpson; on the left the Canton Insurance Co building, by Messrs Bates, Smart & McCutcheon. Both are neat comfortable & dignified. Canton House offers passers-by the pleasure of a mosaic mural at ground floor level. Sydney artist Eric Smith was commissioned to design it; the final outcome so retires into the restrained character of the building front that the designer might well have been Mr McCutcheon himself. A sculpture over the doorway is by Tom Bass. (Canton Insurance, E A Watts, builders; £633,000, 82-ft frontage) (Cross Section 1958:1).

The building has been primarily used as offices by various companies, with the Union Insurance Society of Canton, the company that constructed the site, occupying part of the building from 1958 until 1970 (S&Mc 1970). Another long-term tenant, an accounting firm named Marquard & Sons, were tenants from 1960 until at least 1983 (S&Mc 1960; *Age* 23 February 1983:27). Another insurance firm, Economic Insurance Co Ltd, was present at the site from 1960 until at least 1974 (S&Mc 1960, 1974). Other occupants have included management consultants, real estate agents and value assessors at different periods (S&Mc 1960, 1965, 1970, 1974).

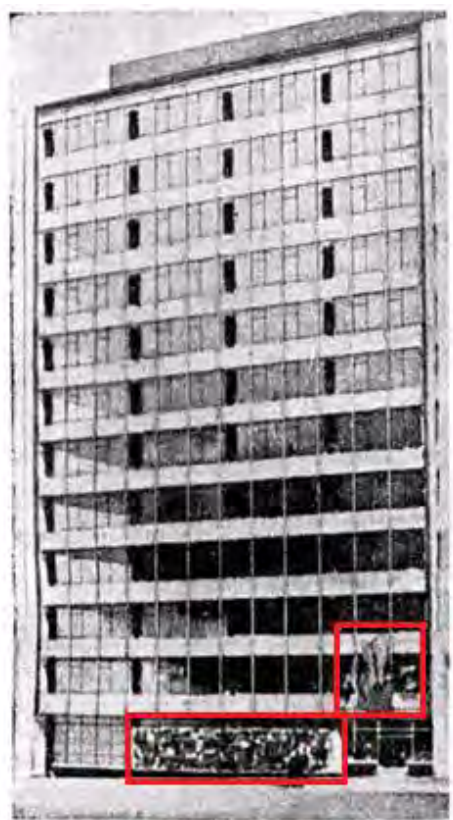


Figure 2. An illustration of the subject building in 1957 prior to its completion. The mosaic mural at street level can be seen, as can the sculpture above the main entrance (both outlined in red). (Source: *Age* 7 February 1957:3)



Figure 3. The Union Insurance Society of Canton Ltd building at 43-51 Queen Street (middle), and the Norwich Union Fire Insurance Society at 53-55 Queen Street (RHS), both under construction in December 1957. (Source: Fowler 1957, SLV copyright)

The most significant change to the building since its construction has been the removal of the mural, sculpture and clock from the ground floor façade. This seems most likely to have occurred in 1977 when alterations were carried out to the ground floor (MBAI 47822). The building has otherwise been subjected to internal partition changes (MBAI).

The site now contains 19 businesses, two shops and two food and drink outlets (CoMMaps).

Bates Smart & McCutcheon, architects

Bates, Smart & McCutcheon (BSM) was formed when Osborn McCutcheon joined the existing firm of Bates & Smart in 1926. Bates & Smart had itself been born out of previous iterations of a firm that could be traced back to Reed & Barnes, thus making it one of the oldest practices in the country (Goad 2012:72). By the 1960s the firm had become one of the largest practices in the country (Goad 2012:72).

During the 1930s, BSM had earned a reputation for designing Georgian-style residences, but also went on to win RVIA awards for their work on the AMP Building in Collins Street, Buckley & Nunn Building in Bourke Street (now David Jones), and a church in Camberwell (Goad 2012:73).

By the 1950s, BSM had become Australia's 'expert' in high-rise office buildings (Goad 2012:73). Much of their work at this time were large structures with glass curtain walls, and in Melbourne this was exemplified by ICI House which broke the city's height limits (Goad 2012:73). This work was considered to have 'changed the skyline [of Melbourne] forever' (Goad 2012:73).

At the time, the firm also developed a reputation for their work on university and other educational facilities. They were responsible for much of the laying out of Monash University, as well as the construction of some of the original buildings, and also had a hand in designing RMIT (Goad 2012:73). Commissions for schools include Yarra Valley Grammar School, Wesley College's Syndal campus, and the Peninsula Grammar School (Goad 2012:73). Their best-known piece of educational work is most likely Wilson Hall at the University of Melbourne (1956), which was built on the site of an earlier Reed & Barnes Gothic structure (Goad 2012:73). Wilson Hall features a sculpture by Tom Bass, as does 158-164 Queen Street Melbourne (also designed by BSM and built in 1964), and the subject site (the sculpture of which is missing), showing a relationship between BSM and the sculptor.

BSM has continued to be an influential firm in the time since the construction of the subject site.

Notable work by the firm includes the Crown Casino and promenade, and the Royal Children's Hospital (Goad 2012:74). BSM has also been involved in large collaborative designs in Melbourne with international architects, such as Melbourne Central with Kisho Kurokawa, Collins Place with I M Pei, and Federation Square with Lab Architecture Studio (Goad 2012:74).

SITE DESCRIPTION

The former Union House at 43-51 Queen Street is an 11-storey commercial curtain wall building in the Post-War Modernist style, designed by Bates Smart & McCutcheon and constructed in 1957. The subject site is positioned on the western side of Queen Street with Collins Street to its north and Flinders Lane to its south. The building has a secondary frontage to Samuel Lane at its rear.

The building exhibits key characteristics of the postwar International style, particularly the lightweight fine graded modular curtain wall façade. The facade to Queen Street comprises an aluminium framed nonloadbearing curtain wall, with alternating clear glazed and coloured opaque glass spandrel panels

providing a lightweight grid across the façade. Every glazed panel is fitted with a large fixed window adjacent to an openable casement sash as the building predates the use of air-conditioning. The frame is natural aluminium finish and the solid panels are opaque red glass divided by glazing bars reinforcing a horizontality to the composition.

The façade has been substantially altered at the ground and first floor level with the replacement of original shop fronts and lower portion of the curtain wall. The original Tom Bass sculpture, Eric Smith mosaic mural and clock have also been removed.

The building has no formal termination or parapet at the top level, as is typical of the style.

The rear elevation facing Samuel Lane comprises full width spandrel panels that appear to be of reinforced concrete, separated by rows of aluminium framed windows similar to the pattern of the Queen Street facade. The building maintains its original set back off Samuel Lane above street level, however at ground level the original carpark has been built over.

INTEGRITY

The former Union House is largely intact with some changes visible to original or early fabric. Above first floor level the principle façade facing Queens Street retains its original non-loadbearing aluminium curtain wall with its alternating clear glazed and opaque coloured glass spandrel panels. The rear façade facing Samuel Lane also retains its precast concrete spandrels and natural aluminium glazing system. Alterations to the Queens Street façade include the first-floor section of the curtain wall being replaced with a projecting modular panel. At street level the retail and office foyer shopfronts have been altered and the original Tom Bass sculpture, Eric Smith mosaic mural and clock have been removed. The original open car parking area fronting Samuel Lane has been built over with the set back above street level maintained. Notwithstanding these alterations overall the building has high integrity.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The 1950s saw the development of the modern multi-story office building in Melbourne, often built for insurance companies or finance companies, or for professional offices. Reinforced concrete frames provided the structural systems, allowing the façade to be clad in a non-load bearing curtain wall. In early examples, curtain walls were typically fully glazed, while in later examples, a greater range of materials were used to achieve variety of expression.

There are a number of buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne which were designed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the former Union House. These are detailed below.

State-significant places

A comparative example in the City of Melbourne which is located immediately adjacent to the Hoddle Grid is ICI House, 1-4 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1958). This place is included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR H0786).

Locally-significant places

Precinct Heritage Overlay

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from the early postwar period are currently included in the

Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme. Those constructed in the 1950s that are included in the Heritage Overlay are currently included as part of Heritage Precincts, but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places. These places are:



Former Gilbert Court, 100-104 Collins Street (John A La Gerche, 1954-55) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Hosie's Hotel, 1-5 Elizabeth Street & 288-290 Flinders Street (Mussen McKay & Potter, 1954-55), included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct as a Significant place.



Coates Building, 18-22 Collins Street (John A La Gerche, 1958-59) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Bank of Adelaide Building, 265-269 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton & Lobb, 1959-60) included in HO502 The Block Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Allans Building, 276-278 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb with Charles N Hollinshed, 1956-57) included in HO502 The Block Precinct as a Significant place.

Other Examples

Despite the demolition of many 1950s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the initial period of curtain wall construction in Melbourne and demonstrate similar characteristics to the subject building. The following examples are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places as part of the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review:



Lauren's House, 414-416 Lonsdale Street (Harold Bloom, 1956) (Interim HO1254).



Former Atlas Assurance Building, 404-406 Collins Street (H Garnet Alsop & Partners, 1958-61) (Interim HO1008).



Former Batman Automatic Telephone Exchange, 376 Flinders Lane (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1957).



Former AMP Building, 402-408 Lonsdale Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1956-59).



Former Ajax House, 103-105 Queen Street (HD Berry, 1956).



HC Sleigh Building, 166-172 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1953-55).



London Assurance House, 468-470 Bourke Street (Bernard Evans, 1960).



Coles & Garrard Building, 376-378 Bourke Street (Meldrum & Noad, 1957).

Analysis

The former Union House compares strongly with other examples of the style in central Melbourne.

With its highly intact upper floor levels of lightweight aluminium framed, fine-graded modular curtain wall façade, with alternating clear glazed and coloured opaque glass spandrel panels, it is comparable to Gilbert House at 100-104 Collins Street, one of the earliest curtain wall offices built in central Melbourne built in 1955 (Significant in HO504 Collins East Precinct) and the Coates Building at 18-20 Collins Street (significant in HO504 Collins East Precinct).

ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓ **CRITERION A**
Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).

CRITERION B
Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).

CRITERION C
Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).

✓ **CRITERION D**
Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).

CRITERION E
Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).

CRITERION F
Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)

CRITERION G
Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).

CRITERION H
Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-3)	No
TO BE INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

OTHER

N/A

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PREVIOUS STUDIES

**Central Activities District
Conservation Study 1985** D

**Central City Heritage
Review 1993** C

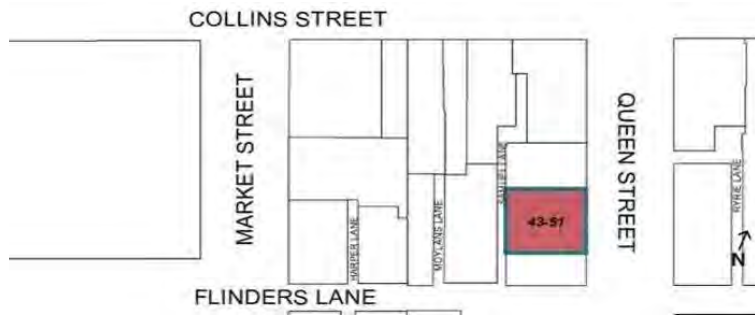
**Review of Heritage
overlay listings in the
CBD 2002** Ungraded

**Central City Heritage
Review 2011** Ungraded

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Former Union House

PS ref no: HO1365XXXX





What is significant?

The former Union House building at 43-51 Queen Street, Melbourne, completed to a design by Bates Smart & McCutcheon in 1958, ~~is significant.~~

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- ~~The building's~~ original ~~external building~~ form and scale;
- ~~e~~Original nonloadbearing curtain wall including natural aluminium frame windows and opaque glass spandrel panels to its principle (Queen Street) façade; ~~and~~
- ~~e~~Original expressed reinforced concrete spandrels and natural aluminium frame windows to its rear (Samuel Lane).

Later alterations, particularly at street level, are not significant.

How it is significant?

The former Union House building at 376-378 Bourke Street is of local historic and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

The former Union House building, designed by Bates Smart & McCutcheon and built by E A Watts in 1958, is historically significant as a part of the postwar development and rapid growth of corporate architecture in Melbourne of the 1950s-60s. The building was constructed for the international company Union Insurance Society of Canton, who owned and occupied the building from 1958 to 1970. Located in the financial and commercial precinct of Queen Street, the building is significant historically as a reflection of the growth of insurance and assurance companies in Victoria during the 1950s-60s, that cemented

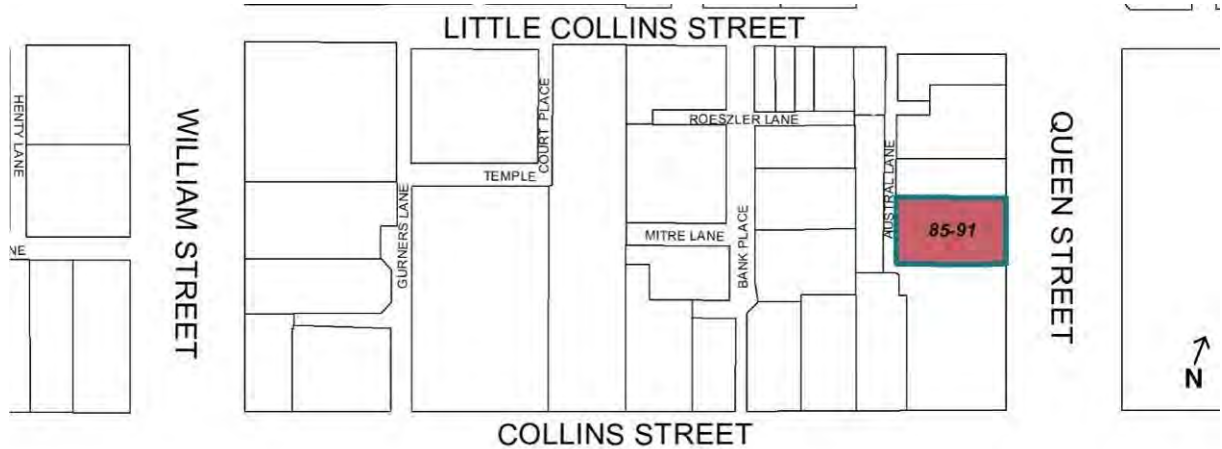
Melbourne's pre-eminent role in the state for financial institutions. The building was designed by architects Bates Smart & McCutcheon, the architectural practice responsible for the design of many notable buildings in Melbourne. By the 1950s, at the time the subject site was built, the firm had become one of the largest practices in the country and had become Australia's 'experts' in high-rise office buildings, exemplified in Melbourne by ICI House (1958). (Criterion A)

The former Union House building is significant as a largely intact example of an architect-designed commercial development in central Melbourne, utilising the Post-War Modernist style that characterised the new wave of development in the postwar period. These buildings represented the new modernism in their modular, industrial Bauhaus inspired aesthetic incorporating features such as consistent access to daylight and open floor plans to meet new standards for commercial office accommodation. The building retains defining characteristics of its style, including the lightweight aluminium framed, fine-graded modular curtain wall façade, with alternating clear glazed and coloured opaque glass spandrel panels providing a lightweight grid across the façade, as well as the rear elevation facing Samuel Lane with full width spandrel panels that appear to be of reinforced concrete, separated by rows of aluminium framed windows similar to the pattern of the Queen Street façade. (Criterion D)

Primary source

~~[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\)](#)~~[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\) \(updated March 2022\)](#)

SITE NAME	Former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch
STREET ADDRESS	85-91 Queen Street, Melbourne
PROPERTY ID	108064



SURVEY DATE: March 2019

SURVEY BY: Context

HERITAGE INVENTORY

N/A

EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY

No

PLACE TYPE

Individual Heritage Place

PROPOSED CATEGORY

Significant

FORMER GRADE

Ungraded

DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:

Meldrum & Partners

BUILDER:

Not known

DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:

Postwar Period (1945-1975)

DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:

1973

THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations.	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style 1.9 Beyond the curtain wall
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Business and finance

LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Offices
1920s	Offices
1960s	Offices, Banks

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Extent of overlay: Refer to map

SUMMARY

The former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch building at 85-91 Queen Street is a ten-storey postwar office building with a basement, completed in 1973 to designs by architects Meldrum & Partners in a later derivative of the Postwar Modernist style. The building was owned and occupied by the bank until c1998. It continues to be used as offices today.

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

Beyond the curtain wall

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding,

screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

Business and finance in the postwar period

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17). Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

SITE HISTORY

The subject land at 85-91 Queen Street is part of Crown Allotments 8 and 9, Block 14, purchased by James Connell in 1837 ('Town of Melbourne' 1838). In 1880 the land comprised two allotments with a laneway at the southern property boundary, and was occupied by two three-storey office buildings addressed as 35 and 37 Queen Street (Mahlstedt Map, no14, 1888). By 1895 the southern building was addressed as 85 or 87 Queen Street and the northern as 89-91 Queen Street (MMBW Detail Plan no 1011, 1895).

From the turn of the twentieth century, a series of trustee, insurance and other professional services companies occupied the office buildings. The Equity Trustees, Executors and Agency Company Limited occupied purpose-built premises at 85 Queen Street from c1901 to 1956, with the building known as the Equity Trustees building during this time (*Argus* 26 March 1956:12; *Royal Institute of Architects Journal* November 1905:169; S&Mc 1900-1955). From 1955, the building at 85-87 Queen Street was known as Insurance House (Figure 1) (S&Mc 1955). By 1960 the National Bank of

Australasia had moved into the building, trading from the premises along with consulting engineers, estate agents and auctioneers (S&Mc 1960).

By 1910 and until 1924, the Perpetual Trustees Company operated from 89-91 Queen Street (Mahlstedt Map Section 1, no 17, 1910; S&Mc 1924). The Australian Metropolitan Life Assurance Company Limited took up residency in the following year, and remained there until at least 1965. The building was known as the Metropolitan Building from 1925 until the 1970s (Figure 1) (S&Mc 1924, 19).



Figure 1. Detail from a c1950-60 photograph of the western side of Queen Street, showing Insurance House (left) and the Metropolitan Building (right). These buildings predated the subject building on the site of 85-91 Queen Street. (Source: Pratt c1950-60, SLV [copyright](#))

In 1971 a permit application was lodged with Melbourne City Council to construct an '11-storey office building' on the site of the existing bank and office building at 85-91 Queen Street (MBAI 42401). Plans were drawn up by architects Meldrum & Partners for NBA Properties, a subsidiary company of the National Bank of Australasia to whom the land was transferred in 1972 (CT:V8945 F296).

The National Bank of Australasia began commercial operations in Queen Street, Melbourne, in 1858. They became the National Bank of Australasia Limited on 1893, registered under the *Victorian Companies Act 1890*. The National Bank of Australasia merged with the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney in 1982 to form the National Australia Bank (NAB) (Merrett 2008). Along with the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, Westpac Banking Corporation and the Australia and New Zealand Banking Group, the NAB has become one of the Australia's four major banks. NBA Properties Limited was established in 1965 as a subsidiary company of the National Bank of Australasia. Its main purpose was to acquire and redevelop sites throughout Australia to house the bank's branches (*Age* 18 January 1966:9; *Age* 16 November 1972:16). The bank owned and occupied 85-91 Queen Street from 1972-73 to c1998.

By December 1973 the subject building had been completed, as a 10-storey building with basement level. Located opposite the stock exchange at the corner of Collins and Queen streets, the subject building was named the Stock Exchange Branch of the National Bank of Australasia (Figure 2) (*Age* 22 December 1973:16).



Figure 2. A c1972 photograph showing 85-91 Queen Street (right) under construction. (Source: Halla c1972, SLV copyright)

In 1982 the National Bank of Australasia merged with the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney to become the National Australia Bank (NAB). The National Australia Bank remained as the building's major tenant until at least 1998 (*Age* 16 September 1998:30; Merrett 2008). Other tenants during this period included commercial real estate agents Allard and Shelton (c1980-c1992), the Southern Australian Perpetual Forests Limited, and various solicitors (*Age* 3 December 1980:26; 14 November 1992:92; 26 March 1998:37).

Changes to the building since its construction have been largely confined to the interior spaces, with the regular alteration of the internal configuration of all floors since 1974 (MBAI). In 1992 the ground level foyer was refurbished at a cost of \$636,250, and in 2002 alterations included extending the first floor and refurbishing the ground floor façade (see Figure 3) (MBAI 70931; CoMMaps).

Today, the ground floor of the subject building comprises retail, while the upper levels house commercial offices and consulting rooms for professional services companies, education and training providers and health professionals (CoMMaps).



Figure 3. A 1998 photograph shows the building prior to its refurbishment in 2002, which saw the first floor extended to the building line and glazed. In the above image, the first floor is clearly recessed beneath the upper levels and the double height street level under-croft and colonnade is clearly intact. (Source: *Age* 16 September 1998:30)

Meldrum & Partners, architects

The architectural practice Meldrum & Partners was formed in 1959 by Percy Hayman Meldrum (1887-1968); it became Meldrum Burrows when Sydney-based Bill Burrows joined the firm. In 1951, Meldrum was joined in practice by his son, Richard John Meldrum (1928-2004), who had a bachelor's degree in architecture from the University of Melbourne. Meldrum Snr retired from practice in 1965. Meldrum Burrows gained particular prominence in the 1970s and 1980s and were involved in advising on and strategic planning for, large projects, including the Australian Embassy at Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (1989) in collaboration with Daryl Jackson, and with Philip Cox in designing Parliament House, Darwin (Willis 2012).

Percy Hayman Meldrum studied at Ballarat College and was articled to A A Fritsch from 1907 to 1913. Moving to London in 1914, Meldrum practiced as an aircraft designer at the War Office and established an atelier in Wells Street, London, which became a gathering place for Australian architects engaged in war service. At the end of World War One Meldrum joined the staff of the Architectural Association, where he taught A G Stephenson and Donald Turner. In 1921, he returned to Australia to join A G Stephenson as Stephenson & Meldrum. Practising as principal designer, he strongly encouraged the inclusion of murals and sculpture in the firm's projects. His work during this time included Newspaper House, Collins Street (1932) and Castlemaine Art Gallery and Historic Museum (1930). Meldrum went on to practice as Meldrum & Noad between 1937 and the 1950s, during which time he won the 1942 RVIA Street Architecture Medal for the National Bank of Australasia building in Collins Street (1938) (Willis 2012).

SITE DESCRIPTION

The former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch building at 85-91 Queen Street is a ten-storey commercial building in the late Post-War Modernist style, constructed in 1973 and designed by architects Meldrum & Partners. Located on the west side of Queen Street between Collins Street and Little Collins Street, the building has a secondary frontage to Austral Lane.

The building demonstrates key characteristics of the Post-War Modernist style, particularly through its use of free form or organic nonloadbearing precast concrete panels as its principal façade element, instead of the flat aluminium framed glass curtain-wall systems that characterised other examples of the style, or the use of precast concrete elements but with a rectangular emphasis that characterised others. The subject building used the potential of precast concrete to create moulded and curved façade modules incorporating window openings while maintaining the rigid modular Bauhaus inspired aesthetic.

The principal façade to Queen Street comprises a nonloadbearing precast concrete panel curtain wall divided vertically into 13 narrow bays of panels with windows set between narrower end panels. The vertical edges to each panel are convex curves, which results in a vertical shadow line where each pair of panels meet, whereas their horizontal joints are simple square butt joints. Cast into each panel is a vertically proportioned window opening with curved corners, with aluminium frame windows divided into two sashes by a horizontal glazing bar set deep into the panels. The building has no formal termination or parapet at the top level, as is typical of the style.

The building originally featured a high double storey undercroft space at street level, typical of commercial buildings in the late Post-War Modernist style, with the entry lobby and first floor mezzanine set back behind a colonnade of widely spaced concrete columns supporting the building above. The building underwent refurbishments in 1992 and 2002 which included the infilling of this undercroft space with new shopfronts for retail tenancies and extending the first floor mezzanine level to the main frontage of the building with a glazed curtain wall. The curving of the lower edge of the original precast panels remains extant, but the dramatic sculptural impact of the original undercroft and colonnade has been reduced. A slim profile aluminium cantilevered awning has also been attached across the width of the façade at the first-floor level.

The western elevation facing Austral Lane comprises 13 equal bays divided vertically by structural precast concrete mullions. Spandrel panels clad in face brick inlay panels sit below fixed windows with projecting precast concrete sills. At the ground level the façade is clad in the same material as the spandrel panels. Windows along the southern elevation (facing the rear of 394 Collins Street) comprise the same applied spandrel panels and precast concrete sills.

INTEGRITY

The former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch building is highly intact in terms of its original scale, built form and configuration. Above the street level, the building retains its original modular pattern of fenestration, and the materiality of the precast panels with their curved corners, window openings and recessed aluminium window frames. There have been some changes to aspects of its original design at ground and first floor level. The original high double-storey undercroft space at street level has been infilled with new shopfronts and the first-floor mezzanine level extended to its main frontage. A cantilevered awning has been added at the first-floor level. In spite of

these changes, the building retains its original built form and scale, much of its original materials and key stylistic details. The building is of high integrity.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The 1950s saw the development of the modern multi-story office building in Melbourne, often built for insurance companies or finance companies, or for professional offices. From this time through to the 1970s and even beyond, the Post-War Modernist styles enjoyed widespread popularity, particularly for medium-rise and high-rise commercial buildings. Reinforced concrete frames provided the structural systems, allowing the façade to be clad in a non-load bearing curtain wall. In early examples, curtain walls were typically fully glazed with an aluminium frame, while in later examples, precast concrete was used to create moulded and curved façade modules incorporating window openings while maintaining the rigid modular Bauhaus inspired aesthetic.

There are a number of buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch building. These are detailed below.

State-significant places

A small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne have been assessed as being of State-level significance and are included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). These include:

- Total House, 170-90 Russell Street (Bogle & Banfield 1964-65; VHR H2329 & HO1095)
- Former Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-44 Bourke Street (Peter Muller 1966-69)
- Victorian Government Offices, Treasury Reserve Precinct (Yuncken Freeman 1967-68 – outside the Hoddle Grid)
- Eagle House, 473 Bourke Street (Yuncken Freeman 1971-72; VHR H1807 & HO901)
- BHP House, 130-148 William Street (Yuncken Freeman 1969-72; VHR H1699 & HO767).

Locally-significant places

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from this period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme on a permanent basis. Those that are, are generally currently included within Heritage Precincts but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places, as follows:

Precinct Heritage Overlay

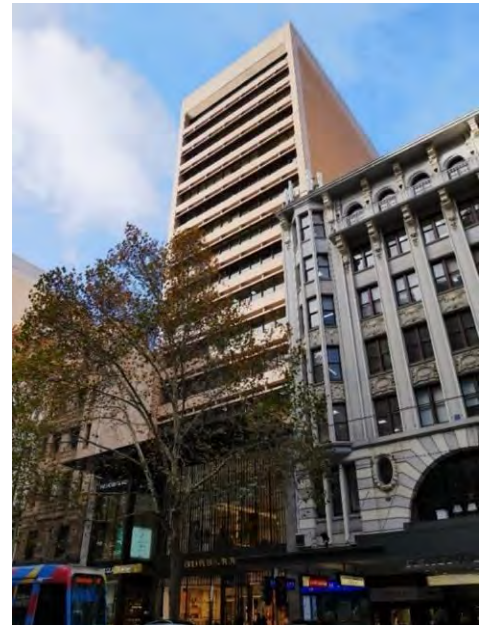
Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street, (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1974) included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct (Non-contributory).



Wales Corner, 221-231 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1964-66) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Swanston Street) Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, 251-257 Collins Street, (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1974-73) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Flinders Lane) (Non-contributory).

One individual heritage place recently included in a site-specific Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis is the Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1966) (HO1213):



Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

Other examples

Despite the demolition of many 1960s and 1970s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the advancement of construction techniques from the 1960s through to the mid 1970s and demonstrate the broad range of design approaches of the period. The podiums of the majority of these places have been modified at street level. Examples include:



Former RACV Club, 111-129 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961) (Interim HO1068)



Former Australia Pacific House, 136-144 Exhibition Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1975-78)



Royal Insurance Group Building, 430-442 Collins Street, (Yuncken Freeman, 1965) (Interim HO1010)



Office Building, 516-520 Collins Street (architect unknown, c1974)



Former Guardian Building, 454-456 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1960-61)



Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building, 155-161 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961-62)



Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



MLA Building, 308-336 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1963)



Royal Mail House, 255-267 Bourke Street (D Graeme Lumsden, 1963)



Former Sleigh Corner Building, 158-164 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1964)



The Former Houston Building, 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kollé & Associates, 1965)



AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street (Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1965-69)



Former Dalgety House, 457-471 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp & Walker, 1966-68)



Former State Saving Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1967-68)



Former Legal & General House, 375-383 Collins Street (B Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking, 1967)



Former AMP Building, 344-350 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1966-68)



Equitable House, 335-349 Little Collins Street (unknown architect, 1968)



Former Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street (Meldrum & Partners with Peddle Thorp Walker, 1968-70)



Former Methodist Church Centre, 130-134 Little Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1966-67)



Cowan House, 457-469 Little Collins Street (E & G Kolle, 1969)



Lonsdale Exchange, 447-553 Lonsdale Street
(Commonwealth Department of Works, 1969)



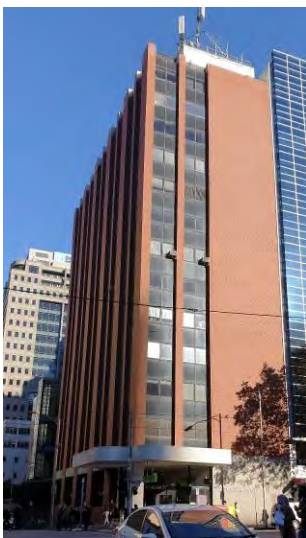
Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William
Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



Former Bryson Centre, 174-192 Exhibition Street
(Perrot Lyon Timlock & Kesa, 1970-72)



Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building,
359-373 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon,
c1972-75)



Nubrick House, 269-275 William Street (Buchan
Laird & Buchan, 1972)



Former Law Department Building, 221-231 Queen
Street (Fischer Group, 1972)



Office Building, 178-188 William Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1972-73)



Former MLC Building, 303-317 Collins Street (Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, c1970-1973)



Office Building, 589-603 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp de Preu, 1973-75)

Analysis

The former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch building at 85-91 Queen Street is comparable to a number of central Melbourne buildings included– or recommended for inclusion – in the HO, including the Scottish Amicable building at 126-146 Queen Street (HO1213), Equitable House at 335-349 Little Collins Street, and Royal Insurance Group Building at 430-442 Collins Street. These buildings all demonstrate the prominent Bauhaus grid design aesthetic of the Post-War Modernist style, based on repetitive nonloadbearing precast concrete façade modules to achieve a more three-dimensional depth to the facades and to maximise access to daylight.

The subject building also demonstrates how some designers used the potential of precast concrete to create moulded and curved façade modules incorporating window openings while maintaining the rigid modular Bauhaus inspired aesthetic. In this respect there are few comparative examples in central Melbourne with sufficient integrity to demonstrate these characteristics in their original condition. It is also unusual for its attention to detail on its secondary façades facing Austral Lane and

the rear of 394 Collins Street with applied decorative brick spandrel panels and precast concrete sills. One clearly comparable example is the former State Laws Office building at 221-233 Queen Street, recommended as individually significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓ **CRITERION A**
Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).

CRITERION B
Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).

CRITERION C
Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).

✓ **CRITERION D**
Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).

CRITERION E
Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).

CRITERION F
Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)

CRITERION G
Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).

CRITERION H
Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-3)	No
TO BE INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

OTHER

N/A

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PREVIOUS STUDIES

**Central Activities District
Conservation Study 1985** Ungraded

**Central City Heritage
Review 1993** Ungraded

**Review of Heritage
overlay listings in the
CBD 2002** Ungraded

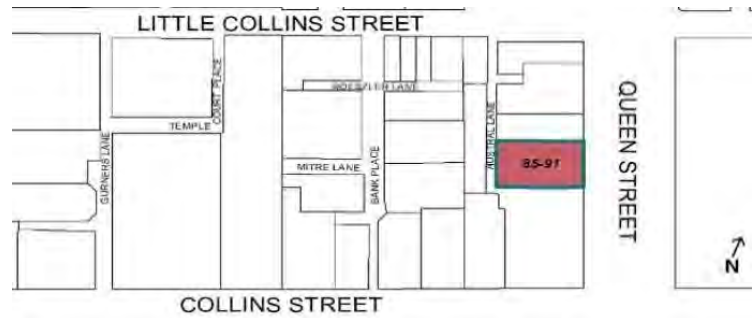
**Central City Heritage
Review 2011** Ungraded

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch



PS ref no: HO [1366XXXX](#)



What is significant?

The Former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch at 85-91 Queen Street, Melbourne, completed to a design by Meldrum and Partners in 1973, ~~is significant.~~

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- ~~The building's original external building form and scale;~~
- ~~Original nonloadbearing precast concrete curtain wall cladding including recessed window openings to its principal (Queen Street) façade;~~

- [Original](#) nonloadbearing curtain walls to its secondary facades facing Austral Lane and the rear of 394 Collins Street; ~~and~~
- [Original](#) aluminium frame windows set deep into the panels.

Later alterations, particularly at street level, are not significant.

How it is significant?

The Former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch at 85-91 Queen Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

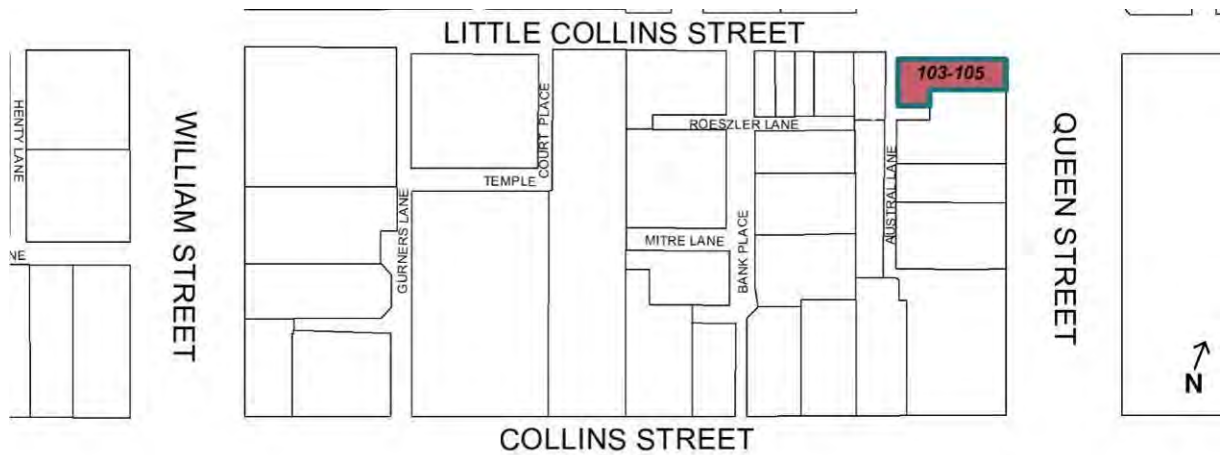
The former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch building, opened in 1973 and designed by Meldrum & Partners, is historically significant as evidence of the postwar development and rapid growth of corporate architecture of the 1950s-1970s that reflected the expansion of large national and international companies opting for construction and naming rights of new city office buildings as a form of promotion and fund investment. Located in the financial and commercial precinct of Queen Street, the former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch building is significant historically as it reflects the growth of banks in Victoria following deregulation of the financial sector from the mid-1960s, cementing Melbourne's pre-eminent role for financial institutions. (Criterion A)

The former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch building is significant as a highly intact example of postwar commercial development in central Melbourne that utilised the Post-War Modernist style, which characterised this wave of development. These buildings represented the new modernism in their modular, industrial, Bauhaus inspired aesthetic incorporating features such as consistent access to daylight and open floor plans to meet new standards for commercial office accommodation. The former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch is a substantial example of the later development in curtain wall design during the 1960s and into the 1970s and beyond when precast concrete was used to create moulded and curved façade modules incorporating window openings while maintaining the rigid modular Bauhaus inspired aesthetic. The building retains its original form and scale, as well as the key characteristics of its original design, including the distinctive free form or organic nonloadbearing precast concrete panels as the principal façade element. The western and southern elevations are highly intact retaining original structural precast concrete mullions, spandrel panels clad in face brick inlay panels below fixed windows with projecting precast concrete sills and ground level detailing to the western façade, and the same applied spandrel panels and precast concrete sills to the southern facade. (Criterion D)

Primary source

~~[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\)](#)~~ [Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\) \(updated March 2022\)](#)

SITE NAME	Former Ajax House
STREET ADDRESS	103-105 Queen Street, Melbourne
PROPERTY ID	108067



SURVEY DATE: March 2019		SURVEY BY: Context	
HERITAGE INVENTORY	N/A	EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY	No
PLACE TYPE	Individual Heritage Place	PROPOSED CATEGORY	Significant
DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:	H D Berry	FORMER GRADE	C
		BUILDER:	Hansen & Yuncken Pty Ltd
DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:	Postwar Period (1945-1965)	DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:	1956

THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations.	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Business and finance

LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Hotels and lodging
1920s	Pubs
1960s	Offices, Services

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Extent of overlay: Refer to map

SUMMARY

A six-storey commercial office building with a basement, named Ajax House constructed in 1956 to the design of architect H D Berry for the Australian company Ajax Insurance Company. It was used as the company headquarters and for its Victorian branch for twenty years, until 1976. The design reflects the new modernism of the early postwar period, emphasising a modern and progressive aesthetic.

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

Business and finance in the postwar period

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17). Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

SITE HISTORY

The L-shaped subject allotment at 103-105 Queen Street is part of Crown Allotment 9, Block 14, purchased by James Connell in 1837 ('Town of Melbourne' 1838). The site was occupied by the Temple Court Hotel, which, by 1954, had existed on the subject site for 118 years (*Herald* 13 February 1954:5; *Argus* 26 April 1855:5).

The hotel was auctioned in 1953, with its location being described as 'a magnificent corner site in the hub of the insurance, commercial and financial world, suitable for immediate development'. However, it was passed in at £62,500 (*Age* 11 November 1953:6; *Argus* 22 January 1954:7). Ajax Insurance Co Ltd purchased the subject site for £72,500 in January 1954. The plans to demolish the hotel and replace it with a new building, as tall as the 40 metre (132 foot) height limit, was announced at the same time (*Argus* 22 January 1954:7).

Australian company Ajax Insurance Company Limited was registered as a company in August 1934 (*Argus* 9 August 1934:6). With its head office in Melbourne, the company's objectives included the provision of insurance for fire, accident, employers' liability, fidelity guarantee, and all other kinds of

insurance (except life insurance) (*Dun's Gazette for New South Wales* 1934:5). In 1951, the company was absorbed by the Industrial Acceptance Corporation Ltd (IAC), a closely associated company (*Age* 17 February 1951:6) but continued to trade as Ajax Insurance Company. In 1981, the company became Citigeneral Insurance Australia Ltd, and later, Citicorp General Insurance Ltd. From 2005, the company operated as Metlife General Insurance Ltd, closing in 2013 (ABD; NIC).

The architectural plans for a building at 103-105 Queen Street, a six-storey office building, were prepared by architect H D Berry in March 1955, and the building permit application was lodged with the City of Melbourne in August 1955. Hansen & Yuncken were appointed as the building company for the construction work, estimated at £196,000 (*Age* 21 November 1956:58; MBAI 29299).

By September 1956, the building was under construction, with the reinforced concrete framework and external panelling underway (see Figure 1). The building was one of the major 40 metre high building projects carried out between 1954 and 1956, when Melbourne saw an office-building boom, especially along Queen Street (*Argus* 7 August 1956:4).

The head office and Victorian Branch of the Ajax Insurance Co Ltd was to operate from the new building. Named Ajax House after the company, the building was opened in March 1957 (see Figure 2) (*Age* 1 March 1957:6).

Internally, the ground, first and second floors were purpose-designed for the Ajax Company's Victorian branch (ground and first level) and head office (second level) operations, with the fourth and fifth floors reserved as open-plan office spaces for lease. The top level contained caretaker's rooms and a recreation room. The main ground-floor lobby and staircase were paved in terrazzo, while the main office areas were carpeted (PROV VPRS 11200/P7 unit 1066).

With the three lower levels of the building occupied by the Ajax Insurance Co, in 1960 the fourth and fifth level offices were leased to financial companies and professionals including Surrey Insurance Co Ltd; Ham, P Walter & Co, stock and share brokers; L B Wallace & Son, accountants; and Ross Wallace & Co, accountants (S&Mc 1960).

Featuring a non-loadbearing curtain walled section on each elevation, the building originally had a terracotta tiled finish to the Queen and Little Collins street elevations (see Figure 2 and Figure 3) (PROV VPRS 11200/P7 unit 1066). Only one formal entrance existed on Queen Street, with an opening made to the ground level façade of the Little Collins Street elevation, possibly in 1982, when alterations were made to the ground floor offices and the basement at a cost of \$100,000 (MBAI 54805).

In 1976, Ajax Insurance Co Ltd sold the building (*Age* 8 April 1976:23; CT:V9161 F608). Following the sale, the building continued to be tenanted through to the 1990s by professionals such as solicitors and auctioneers (*Age* 8 January 1977:99; 21 November 1990:62).

The removal of the terracotta tiling and the addition of concrete panels as recladding to today's ground retail spaces fronting Little Collins Street are likely to be alterations from 1996 when the building was refurbished (MBAI; CoMMaps).

Today, 103-105 Queen Street houses six business tenants and three food and drink outlets (CoMMaps).



Figure 1. 103-105 Queen Street during construction work in September 1956. (Source: *Cross-Section* 1956)



Figure 2. A newspaper illustration from March 1957, showing the completed building named Ajax House. (Source: *Age* 1 March 1957:6)

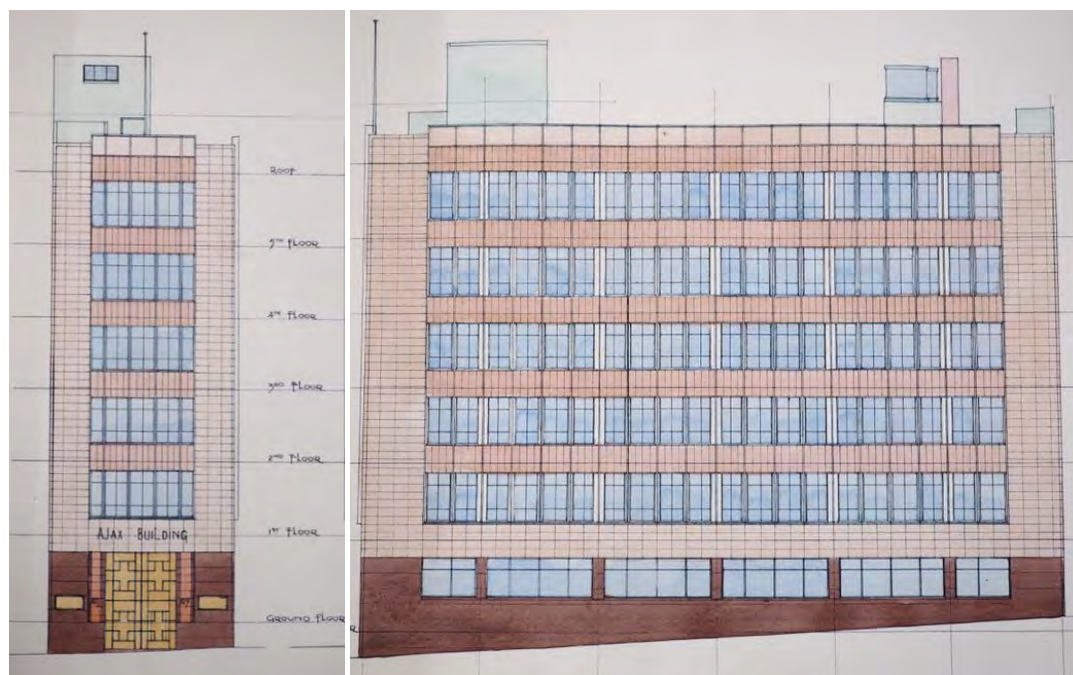


Figure 3. Original plans from 1955, showing the tile-clad Queen Street elevation (left) and Little Collins elevation (right) of the subject building at 103-105 Queen Street. (Source: PROV VPRS 11200/P7 unit 1066)

Australian company Ajax Insurance Company Limited was registered as a company in August 1934 (*Argus* 9 *Argus* 1934:6). With its head office in Melbourne, the company's objectives included the provision of insurance for fire, accident, employers' liability, fidelity guarantee, and all other kinds of insurance (except life insurance) (*Dun's Gazette for New South Wales* 1934:5).

In 1951, the company was absorbed by the Industrial Acceptance Corporation Ltd (IAC), a closely associated company (*Age* 17 February 1951:6) but continued to trade as Ajax Insurance Company. In 1981, the company became Citigeneral Insurance Australia Ltd, and later, Citicorp General Insurance Ltd. From 2005, the company operated as Metlife General Insurance Ltd, closing in 2013 (ABD; NIC).

H D Berry, architect

After serving in World War One, H D Berry passed his Professional Practice Examination in architecture in 1921, and by 1927 had opened his architectural practice at his residence 'Neangar' in Warragul Road, Oakleigh (RVIA 1921:158; November 1921:119 and March 1927:2). Berry's commissions included other city developments as well as buildings in Oakleigh. City projects included a design for a new building 'Central Hotel', located on the south side of Bourke Street between Russell and Exhibition streets (since demolished) (*Argus* 24 August 1939, as cited in AAI record no 17298) In 1959, after Ajax House, Berry was involved in the reconstruction of a hire car company depot at 60 Collins Place, Melbourne, for use by new owners the Industrial Acceptance Corporation (the parent company of Ajax Insurance Co), again with Hansen & Yuncken as builders (*Cross-Section* 1 August 1959:4, as cited in AAI record no 89035). The building has since been demolished.

Other buildings designed by Berry included the Oakleigh Memorial Hall and RSL at 95-97 Drummond Street, Oakleigh, opened in 1922; and a second wing for the Camberley Flats, at 17a Milton Street, Elwood (part of HO7, City of Port Phillip).

SITE DESCRIPTION

The former Ajax House, at 103-105 Queen Street, Melbourne, is a six-storey commercial building located on the south-west corner of Queen Street and Little Collins Street with Austral Lane at its rear. It was constructed in 1956 to a design by architect H D Berry, as the offices and headquarters of the Ajax Insurance Company. The building has a narrow frontage to Queen Street with a longer frontage to Little Collins Street. Although it was constructed after 1945, the building exhibits some characteristics of the new modernism and of the Interwar Functionalist style, particularly the three-dimensional expression of the window modules, although with a vertical rather than a horizontal expression as is more common for the style. The design incorporates modern features such as enhanced access to daylight and open floor plans to meet new standards for commercial office accommodation.

The principal facades to Queen Street and Little Collins Street are of painted render, probably over nonloadbearing brickwork. The building structure is of reinforced concrete post and slab construction. Above ground level both elevations are symmetrical, and heavily articulated with projecting painted frames around and separating the panels of window openings, providing a strong vertical emphasis. A plain recessed spandrel finished in painted render separates the window modules at each floor level. The window modules do not extend to the perimeters of the building, and are framed by areas of plain painted render walls. The original architectural drawings show these areas of wall were originally clad in terracotta tiles, which appear to have been removed in 1996.

The façade to Queen Street is divided into five vertical panels of glazing with the outer panels being narrower than the three centre panels. The Little Collins Street façade is divided into twenty vertical panels of glazing. Whilst this results in the façades having a strong vertical emphasis, the continuous bands of windows and solid spandrels reinforce the horizontal plane. What appear to be original openable multi-paned steel frame windows are extant, and are indicative of the building predating the use of air-conditioning.

The rear (western) elevation facing Austral Lane (and its return down a service lane) is an unadorned facade finished in roughcast render. A regular pattern of four narrow openable windows at each level provide light and ventilation to the amenities block positioned at the southern end of the building.

At the ground level along both Queen Street and Little Collins Street, the building has been substantially altered over time, with contemporary shopfronts replacing the original windows and masonry walls.

INTEGRITY

The former Ajax House at 103-105 Queen Street is largely intact above ground level with some changes visible to the original fabric. The building retains key characteristics of its early postwar design and construction that exhibit the new modernism and elements of the interwar Functionalist style, including in the fenestration and detail at the upper floor levels. The original reinforced concrete slab and post construction with vertical glazing and metal fins remain extant as do original openable sash windows across all facades. The original terracotta tiles to the upper levels have been replaced and the ground floor level altered with removal of windows and masonry walls. Despite the changes, 103-105 Queen Street retains its original scale and form, and characteristic stylistic details of the building remain highly legible, reflecting the era and original design in which it was developed. Overall the place is of high integrity.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

During the early 1950s, following the end of the World War Two, building activities in central Melbourne slowly revived. The Post-War Modernist style, which accompanied the development of the curtain wall, was becoming popular and was used in many corporate buildings. While some examples adopted fully glazed curtain walls, in other examples a greater range of materials were used to achieve variety of expression. A group of buildings built in the mid-1950s to early 1960s combined expansive glazed panels with solid masonry sections to achieve a distinctive aesthetic.

While embracing the new curtain wall technique, the design of Ajax House at 103-105 Queen Street displays some characteristics of the Functionalist style. The style was fashionable pre-World War Two and continued to be popular in the postwar period, especially for modern service facilities such as car showrooms and institutional buildings, as well as for infrastructure buildings such as the Russell Street Automatic Telephone Exchange and Postal Building at 114-120 Russell Street. The style was also adopted for some medium-rise commercial buildings such as Ajax House.

The following examples are comparable with the former Ajax House, being of a similar style and use and construction date, although scale varies.

State-significant places

A comparative example in the City of Melbourne which is located immediately adjacent to the Hoddle Grid is ICI House, 1-4 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1958). This place is included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR H0786).

Locally-significant places

Precinct Heritage Overlay

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from the early postwar period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme. Those constructed in the 1950s that are included in the Heritage Overlay are currently included as part of Heritage Precincts, but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places. These places are:



Former Gilbert Court, 100-104 Collins Street (John A La Gerche, 1954-55) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Hosie's Hotel, 1-5 Elizabeth Street & 288-290 Flinders Street (Mussen McKay & Potter, 1954-55), included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct as a Significant place.



Coates Building, 18-22 Collins Street (John A La Gerche, 1958-59) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Bank of Adelaide Building, 265-269 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton & Lobb, 1959-60) included in HO502 The Block Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Allans Building, 276-278 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb with Charles N Hollinshed, 1956-57) included in HO502 The Block Precinct as a Significant place.

Other Examples

Despite the demolition of many 1950s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the initial period of curtain wall construction in Melbourne and demonstrate similar characteristics to the subject building. The following examples are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places as part of the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review:



Lauren's House, 414-416 Lonsdale Street (Harold Bloom, 1956) (Interim HO1254).



Former Atlas Assurance Building, 404-406 Collins Street (H Garnet Alsop & Partners, 1958-61) (Interim HO1008).



Former Batman Automatic Telephone Exchange, 376 Flinders Lane (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1957).



Former AMP Building, 402-408 Lonsdale Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1956-59).



Former Ajax House, 103-105 Queen Street (HD Berry, 1956).



HC Sleigh Building, 166-172 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1953-55).



London Assurance House, 468-470 Bourke Street (Bernard Evans, 1960).



Canton Insurance Building, 43-51 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1957).

Analysis

Ajax House at 103-105 Queen Street displays characteristics typically seen in the 1950s corporate buildings built in the Post-War Modernist style. While some early examples such as Gilbert House (individually significant in HO504) adopted a fully curtain-walled façade, the juxtaposition of light-weight curtain wall and solid masonry was not uncommon. Some examples assessed and recommended as individually significant places in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review share similar characteristics, exhibiting an operable glazing section surrounded by solid tiled areas. Similar examples from this study include Laurens House at 414-416 Lonsdale Street (interim HO1254), former Atlas Assurance Company at 404-406 Collins Street (interim HO1008), Sleigh House at 166-172 Queen Street and 376-382 Flinders Lane.

103-105 Queen Street also exhibits some influences of the interwar Functionalist style, reflecting the new modernism of the early postwar period, especially as its main façade elements demonstrate a vertical rather than the usual horizontal emphasis of the style. The Queen Street and Little Collins Street façades feature the expressed window modules projecting from a simple recessed masonry form which are typical of the style.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓	<p>CRITERION A Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION B Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).</p>
	<p>CRITERION C Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).</p>
✓	<p>CRITERION D Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).</p>
	<p>CRITERION E Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION F Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)</p>
	<p>CRITERION G Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION H Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-3)	No
TO BE INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

OTHER

N/A

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PREVIOUS STUDIES

**Central Activities District
Conservation Study 1985** D

**Central City Heritage
Review 1993** C

**Review of Heritage
overlay listings in the
CBD 2002** Ungraded

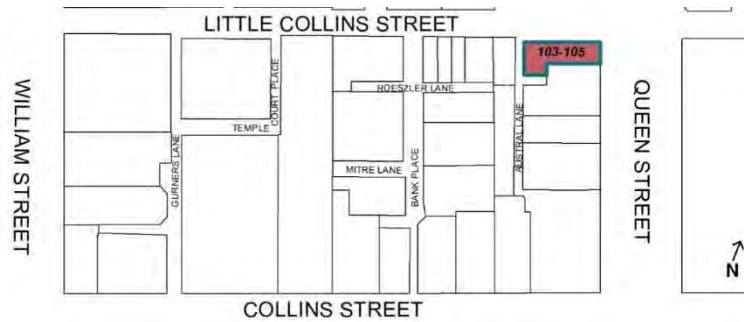
**Central City Heritage
Review 2011** Ungraded

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Former Ajax House



PS ref no: HO1367XXXX



What is significant?

Former Ajax House, at 103-105 Queen Street, Melbourne, constructed to a design by architect H.D Berry in 1956, is significant.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external building form and scale;

- [Original pattern of fenestration, including projecting frames around and separating panels of window openings, projecting from a simple recessed masonry form, and pattern of window openings;](#)~~and~~
- [Original openable multipane steel frame windows.](#)

Later alterations, particularly at street level, are not significant.

How it is significant?

The former Ajax House at 103-105 Queen Street is of local historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

Former Ajax House is historically significant as a part of the postwar development and rapid growth of corporate architecture in central Melbourne of the 1950s-70s that reflected the expansion of large national and international companies opting for construction and naming rights of new city office buildings as a form of promotion and fund investment. The building was purpose-built in 1956 for Australian company Ajax Insurance Company Limited to house the company's head office (second level), and its Victorian branch (ground and first level) with the upper two floors reserved as open-plan office spaces for lease.

The Ajax Insurance Company occupied Ajax House until 1976. Located in the financial and commercial precinct of Queen Street, the building is significant historically as a reflection of the growth of insurance and assurance companies in Victoria during the 1950s-70s, cementing Melbourne's pre-eminent role in the state for financial institutions. (Criterion A)

Former Ajax House is a significant example of early postwar commercial development in central Melbourne [that prevailed prior to the 1960s abolition of the 40 metre \(132 foot\) height control that had been in place since 1916](#). It retains its original form, scale and stylistic details which reflect the era in which it was constructed. It exhibits a similar design aesthetic and quality as other examples of its type, being medium-rise commercial office buildings designed to convey a modern and progressive aesthetic. Key stylistic details include the heavily articulated fenestration with projecting frames around and separating the panels of window openings. It is unusual for this articulation to have a strong vertical rather than horizontal emphasis. It also retains its original openable multipane steel frame windows to the upper commercial floors. (Criterion D)

Primary source

~~[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\)](#)~~[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\) \(updated March 2022\)](#)

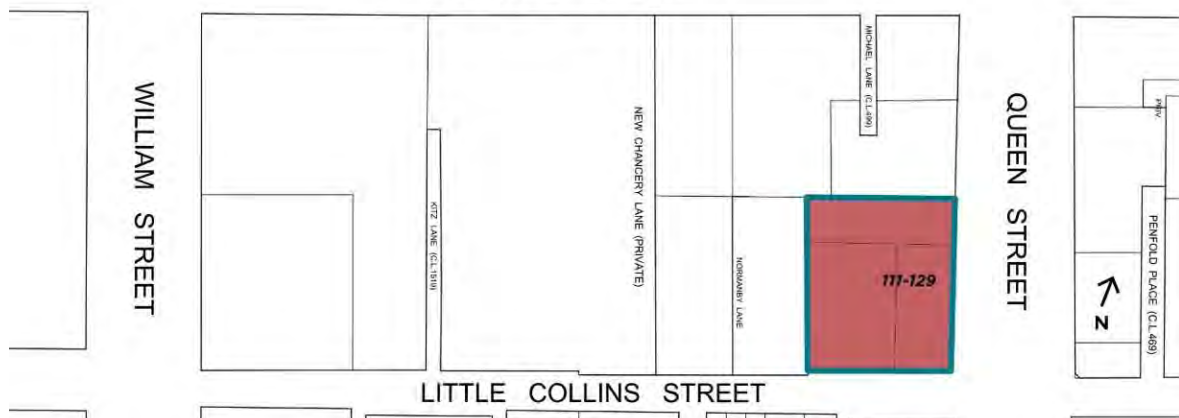
SITE NAME Former Royal Automobile Club of Victoria

STREET ADDRESS 111-129 Queen Street, Melbourne

PROPERTY ID 108068



BOURKE STREET



SURVEY DATE: May 2017

SURVEY BY: Context

HERITAGE INVENTORY	NA	EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY	Yes – interim controls HO1068
PLACE TYPE	Individual Heritage Place	PROPOSED CATEGORY	Significant
DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:	Bates Smart McCutcheon	FORMER GRADE	C
		BUILDER:	Lewis Construction Co.
DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:	Postwar Period (1945-1965)	DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:	1959-1961

THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations.	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review Vols. 3 & 4 June 2016) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style
	1.9 Beyond the curtain wall
8 Enjoying the city	8.3 Entertainment and socialising

LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Chambers, services, factories and workshops
1920s	Chambers, services, factories and workshops
1960s	Motor and service stations, club

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Extent of overlay: Refer to map

SUMMARY

The former Royal Automobile Club of Victoria (RACV) at 111-129 Queen Street constructed in 1961 by Bates Smart McCutcheon, was the headquarters of the large and influential RACV, formed as a social club and becoming important advocates for the rights of Victorian motorists .

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

Beyond the curtain wall

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding, screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

Entertainment and socialising

The retail and entertainment precincts in Melbourne, which emerged in the early 1960s, were largely protected from consolidation and redevelopment due to lower plot ratio controls and difficulty in consolidating a sufficient number of properties to achieve a legitimate tower form. The level of

redevelopment in these precincts is more modest, with fine grained, smaller sized allotments along with valued heritage fabric. During this phase, conservation of heritage buildings was not yet an intentional pursuit, but rather a residual effect of the prevailing logic of the planning system (CoM 2016:5-7).

Higher disposable income, more leisure time, and larger metropolitan populations created an increase in entertainment and tourism industries in every Australian capital city. According to Marsden, only the office and finance sector has had more impact on the physical expansion and alteration of existing places, especially in central Sydney and Melbourne. Even though increased suburbanisation from the 1950s led to the closure of entertainment venues and theatres in Melbourne's city centre, other venues opened. In 1970, for example, Hoyts Cinema Centre in Bourke Street opened the first multi-cinema complex in Australia.

Clubs have also historically been an important part of city life. The Lyceum Club for women built new premises at 2-18 Ridgway Place in 1959 while new clubrooms for the RACV Club were built at 123 Queen Street in 1961. Such places provided patrons with a space in the city to meet, network and promote cultural activities.

Promoting tourism

The city's role in tourism declined with the increased popularity and ownership of the motor car. But this development saw the establishment of the RACV in 1918, which provided services to motoring tourists. Melbourne was promoted as a tourist destination in the 1920s and 1930s with the aid of appealing advertisements. The staging of the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne gave the city a major boost as an international tourist destination and won for Melbourne the reputation as the 'friendly city' (Context, 2011:74).

SITE HISTORY

Thomas D Weatherley is recorded as an early owner of the site on which the RACV Club is located (Crown Record Plan). Land use in the nineteenth century included Bank Chambers, a factory and Melbourne Chambers (MMBW, 1895).

The RACV Club was formed as the Automobile Club of Victoria in 1903 and was intended as a social club for car and motorcycle owners to enjoy motor sports and touring (RACV 2018). Its first car rally was held at Aspendale Park Racecourse in 1904. In 1916, it received the approval of His Majesty the King to prefix the title 'Royal' to its name. Since that time, it has been a major promoter of motoring and tourism in the State, creating opportunities for its members to engage with 'motoring' as a leisure activity. The first Club premises were on Collins Street, Melbourne.

'The first Club premises were three rooms rented from the Reform Club, at 243 Collins Street, including a billiard room, reading room and luncheon room/bar. By 1908, increasing membership led to a move to the larger Equitable Building at 91 Elizabeth Street. With female members welcomed to the Club the following year, an afternoon tea room and ladies' lounge were added.'

Before the subject site was built, the Club were based at a different, purpose-built location on Queen Street:

'The Club built its own headquarters at 94 Queen Street in 1925, including a fine dining room and even its own hairdresser. Key post-war developments included the 1952 country

club at Healesville, complete with extensive sporting facilities, and new headquarters at 111-129 Queen Street, which the Club moved to in 1961' (RACV 2018)

In 1939, the Council of the RACV Club purchased a building on the corner of Queen and Little Collins Streets with a view to its demolition and the construction of new clubrooms to replace its existing premises at 94-96 Queen Street. The RACV council invited the firm of Bates Smart McCutcheon to carry out an extensive survey of the site and the needs of the growing organisation. Their comprehensive report led to the decision to build, and the Australian Temperance and General Mutual Life Assurance Society Ltd agreed to advance a loan for the construction. The existing building was demolished and the foundation stone laid by Sir Dallas Brooks, Chief Patron of the RACV, on 30 October 1959. The RACV Club building was erected between 1959-61 for use by members of the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria. It was constructed by Lewis Construction Co to designs by Bates Smart McCutcheon.

Believed to be the first building in Melbourne to employ the fast track or staged approach to design and construction, the massive structure was completed in 1961 and incorporated both an office and a club building each serviced by separate entries and lifts to meet the strict liquor licensing requirements. The RACV Club offered accommodation, bars, billiard rooms, lounges and dining facilities for members all accessible directly from the basement car park or via a well-appointed lobby. Then regarded as a quiet tree-lined street, the architects provided a first-floor terrace to overlook the sylvan scene in Queen Street; balconies like this being now an uncommon element in the City of Melbourne. The terrace led from the dining and lounge areas and offered 'a beautiful summer rendezvous before lunch or for after dinner coffee'. Although a romantic concept that may not have lived up to its promise, the internal courtyard and flexible spaces of the lounge and dining areas, were thought to be new to Melbourne at the time. The club manager JJ Kelleher had toured overseas to ensure that the best ideas in bedroom comfort and food presentation went into the plans.

The building was opened on 11 March 1961, with the claim that it achieved a new accommodation standard for Melbourne. The opening speech was made by Sir Charles Lowe, the club administrator, in front of delegates from English, Scottish, American, Canadian and New Zealand automobile associations. Some 200 staff were hired to serve the new expanded facilities in all departments of the club, such that by 1970 the club employed over 1000 people to support its 500,000 members.

In 2007 the RACV moved their city club and office premises to 501 Bourke Street. The subject site has since been refurbished into a hotel, restaurants and bars.



Figure 1. RACV Club, 111-129 Queen Street constructed 1961. (Source:Sievers 1961, SLV [copyright](#))

Bates Smart McCutcheon, architects

Bates Smart McCutcheon was formed in 1926 when Sir Osborne McCutcheon joined in partnership with E. A Bates and C.P. Smart of Bates Smart. BSM had grown out of the notable practice, Reed & Barnes. During the 1950s BSM became Australia's expert in high rise office towers, largely through patronage by MLC, a leading client who employed BSM to produce headquarters in capital cities around Australia. The firm's office buildings shifted from glazed curtain wall to facades of artificial stone or pre-fabricated concrete panels. The firm continues as Bates Smart and has had many collaborations with international architects such as Skidmore Owings and Merrill (USA) and I.M. Pei (also USA). The work of BSM spans all types of commercial and institutional buildings and is firmly based in the various aspects of Modernism (Goad & Willis, 2012:73)

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

The RACV Club is one of several important social clubs in the central city, located in the financial district and having a largely professional membership, with strong connections to Melbourne's social elite. The facilities were designed to enable members to socialise together, meet with colleagues, hold informal and formal business meetings, and attend talks and functions. Government awards and announcements were held here, and a wide variety of organisations used the RACV Club premises for seminars and lectures.

As a membership-based organisation the RACV Club attracts a loyal following. Members used the club premises for important personal, family and business celebrations such as weddings,

anniversaries and announcements. The RACV Club also supported interest groups such as the Tripe Club and pennant grade snooker.

Oral history interviews with Club members, staff and RACV Board prior to the move to the new premises in Bourke Street reveal a strong sense of attachment to the Club premises. After the move, members expressed concern that their former club was being used as a night club, seeing this as a desecration of a space they felt strongly connected to.

The RACV Club also demonstrates the social conscience of the Board and Staff with initiatives such as establishing a hospitality training partnership with Holmesglen TAFE in 1996, the first of its kind, and offering employment to two of the twenty students at the program's conclusion (The Age, 24 January 1996, p. 24). Another initiative was enabling social charity the One Umbrella group to use the kitchen at the RACV Club to make 1000 pies each week, almost all with rescued food and distributed to groups such as Open Family, Anglicare and the Salvation Army (The Age 7 April 2002, p. 12).

SITE DESCRIPTION

The former RACV Club at 111-129 Queen Street comprises a three-storey transparent cantilevered podium, clad in elegant aluminium framed glass, and polished black granite and with its own canopy, surmounted by a 15-storey manganese brick clad tower free-standing on three sides. Although the building was not unduly tall by local standards, the façade width and floor plan were exceptionally large and provided for a typical floor area of almost 20,000m² at a time when half that figure was regarded as a good-sized area for city office use. The tower is distinguished by a rigidly regular arrangement of formerly brass-framed windows (now with white painted reveals) repeated at each floor level. This arrangement echoes the adjoining Perpetual Trustees Building at 100-104 Queen Street.

The elevated masonry-clad block rests on stilts above the podium as discrete and well formulated massing, the columns being visible as they pass through the podium on the south side. Not easily seen from ground level, the roof over the tower block has a butterfly form that floats above the façade which, combined with the glazed podium, gives the lightness and clarity of purpose sought by Modernist designers. The first-floor level has an undercroft that houses shops and has two exposed entry stairs ascending from the ground to first floor. River stones fill the paving strip between footpath asphalt and shopfront entry. On the south side a 'hit and miss' upper-level brick screen masks services, as a textured foil to the other all-glass cladding. The basement was equipped with a car lift and the entry foyer is multi-level. Externally, the building survives largely in its original form. The RACV Club has moved to a new site in Bourke Street.

INTEGRITY

The RACV Club was refurbished ~~internally in after~~ [2004⁷ and converted to hotel accommodation, restaurants and bars. Later alterations include:](#)

- [New shopfronts on the frontages on Queen and Little Collins Streets;](#)
- [Alterations to the stairs at the south end of the Queen Street frontage;](#)
- [Removed sections of the first floor of the podium to create recessed balconies;](#)
- [Frameless glass handrail and steel frame awning on the podium;](#)
- [Fixed glazing on the lower levels of the tower on the Queen and Little Collins Street](#)

[frontages.](#)

~~with the addition of retail shops to the ground floor by filling in the undercroft, a conversion to hotel accommodation, restaurants and bars. The refurbishment works were carried out in stages over twelve months in 2007.~~ Above the first-floor level the building has retained its integrity.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The RACV Club building exemplifies a departure from the glass curtain wall of the 1950s to a brick-cladding over a concrete frame for the tower component. Notwithstanding the necessarily standardised and repetitive nature of the construction system, there was still scope for individuality and aesthetic effect. This was generally expressed through a variety of design techniques at ground and first floor levels, sometimes incorporating double height spaces, mezzanine levels, shopfronts and sometimes cantilevered glazed features. Earlier versions of this type include Essington Lewis House at 500 Bourke Street (Meldrum & Noad, 1958-59; Dem.1970s) with its façade of dressed Stawell freestone, and the premises of the Electrolytic Zinc Company at 390 Lonsdale Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1959, altered) which used pre-cast concrete units in a fashion that would be widely imitated over the next decade.

There are a number of buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the RACV Club building. These are detailed below.

State-significant places

A small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne have been assessed as being of State-level significance and are included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). These include:

- Total House, 170-90 Russell Street (Bogle & Banfield 1964-65; VHR H2329 & HO1095)
- Former Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-44 Bourke Street (Peter Muller 1966-69)
- Victorian Government Offices, Treasury Reserve Precinct (Yuncken Freeman 1967-68 – outside the Hoddle Grid)
- Eagle House, 473 Bourke Street (Yuncken Freeman 1971-72; VHR H1807 & HO901)
- BHP House, 130-148 William Street (Yuncken Freeman 1969-72; VHR H1699 & HO767).

Locally-significant places

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from this period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme on a permanent basis. Those that are, are generally currently included within Heritage Precincts but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places, as follows:

Precinct Heritage Overlay

Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street, (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1974) included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct (Non-contributory).



Wales Corner, 221-231 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1964-66) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Swanston Street) Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, 251-257 Collins Street, (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1974-73) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Flinders Lane) (Non-contributory).

One individual heritage place recently included in a site-specific Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis is the Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1966) (HO1213):



Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

Other examples

Despite the demolition of many 1960s and 1970s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the advancement of construction techniques from the 1960s through to the mid 1970s and demonstrate the broad range of design approaches of the period. The podiums of the majority of these places have been modified at street level. Examples include:



Office Building, 178-188 William Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1972-73)



Former Australia Pacific House, 136-144 Exhibition Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1975-78)



Royal Insurance Group Building, 430-442 Collins Street, (Yuncken Freeman, 1965) (Interim HO1010)



Office Building, 516-520 Collins Street (architect unknown, c1974)



Former Guardian Building, 454-456 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1960-61)



Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building, 155-161 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961-62)



Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



MLA Building, 308-336 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1963)



Royal Mail House, 255-267 Bourke Street (D Graeme Lumsden, 1963)



Former Sleigh Corner Building, 158-164 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1964)



The Former Houston Building, 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kolle & Associates, 1965)



AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street (Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1965-69)



Former Dalgety House, 457-471 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp & Walker, 1966-68)



Former State Saving Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1967-68)



Former Legal & General House, 375-383 Collins Street (B Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking, 1967)



Former AMP Building, 344-350 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1966-68)



Equitable House, 335-349 Little Collins Street (unknown architect, 1968)



Former Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street (Meldrum & Partners with Peddle Thorp Walker, 1968-70)



Former Methodist Church Centre, 130-134 Little Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1966-67)



Cowan House, 457-469 Little Collins Street (E & G Kolle, 1969)



Lonsdale Exchange, 447-553 Lonsdale Street
(Commonwealth Department of Works, 1969)



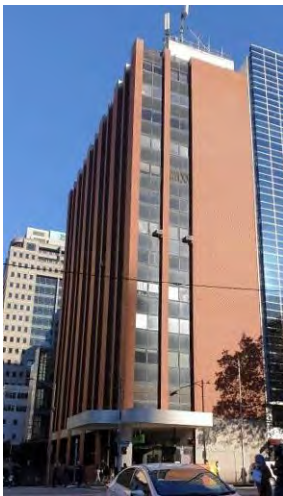
Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William Street
(Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



Former Bryson Centre, 174-192 Exhibition Street
(Perrot Lyon Timlock & Kesa, 1970-72)



Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building,
359-373 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon,
c1972-75)



Nubrick House, 269-275 William Street (Buchan
Laird & Buchan, 1972)



Former Law Department Building, 221-231 Queen Street
(Fischer Group, 1972)



Former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch, 85-91 Queen Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1973)



Former MLC Building, 303-317 Collins Street (Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, c1970-1973)



Office Building, 589-603 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp de Preu, 1973-75)

The RACV Club may also be compared to the Lyceum Club and Hosie's Hotel in terms of use and typology (hotels and recreation). Both these buildings were also constructed in the same period and are modernist in design.

The below images and descriptions are provided by CoM Maps unless stated otherwise, with images dating from c2000 or later.

Lyceum Club, 2-18 Ridgway Place (Interim HO1285)

2-18 Ridgway Place was designed in 1959 by architect Ellison Harvie for the Lyceum Club, the largest and most important club for professional women in Victoria. This modernist building is characterised by its floating first floor form and aesthetic expression of structural and building elements.



Figure 2. Lyceum Club, 2-18 Ridgway Place constructed 1959.

Hosie's Hotel 1-5 Elizabeth Street, 1956 (HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct, VHR H2094 mural only)

Hosie's Hotel is an exemplar building of precast concrete. Designed in the European manner and built for Melbourne's Olympic Games it was one of the first modern hotels to be built in central Melbourne (Flinders Gate Precinct HO505, exterior mural by Richard Beck H2094, HO938 mural only). It is also included on the RAI A Twentieth Century Buildings Register.



Figure 3. 1-5 Elizabeth Street constructed 1956.

Analysis

The RACV Club, like the Lyceum Club demonstrates an assured composition that expresses the function of a members' club. This is still evident despite having undergone alterations. The RACV Club's is a relatively early example of the return to the use of masonry for towers that was pioneered by Bates Smart McCutcheon in the early 1960s. Whilst having been altered at the ground and podium levels, it has survived relatively intact above this level.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓	<p>CRITERION A Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION B Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).</p>
	<p>CRITERION C Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).</p>
✓	<p>CRITERION D Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).</p>
✓	<p>CRITERION E Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).</p>
	<p>CRITERION F Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)</p>
✓	<p>CRITERION G Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).</p>
✓	<p>CRITERION H Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-3)	No
TO BE INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

OTHER

N/A

REFERENCES

Contextual History references contained within *City of Melbourne Hoddle Grid Heritage Review: Postwar Thematic Environmental History 1945-1975*

The following sources and data were used for this assessment (Graeme Butler, 2011). Note that the citation prepared in 2011 did not provide in text referencing.

General sources

Historic Buildings Preservation Council reports on the Melbourne Central Business District from the 1970s

Melbourne City Council on-line i-Heritage database;

Mahlstedt fire insurance map series held in the State Library of Victoria collection and Melbourne University Archives;

Daily newspaper reports such as 'The Argus';

Australian Architecture Index (AAI), prepared by Professor Miles Lewis and others;

Melbourne City Council building application drawings and files held at Melbourne City Council and the Victorian Public Records Office.

Keith and John Reid, CBD Study Area 7 Historic Buildings Preservation Council, 1976: page 139;

Twentieth Century Architecture Register of Royal Australian Institute of Architects:

MCC Building Permit Applications: March 1973, 43622 \$6,700,000 24 storey office building (followed by many fit-out applications) 1990, 68563 refurbish ground level

RACV Club

<https://www.racv.com.au/about-racv/our-business/our-heritage.html> (accessed 13.6.2018)

State Library of Victoria

'Business Who's Who of Australia' 1974: 229

Victorian Heritage Register:

Barry Patten

Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA): Mining Booms and the Australian Economy

Other sources

Swain, S, The Alexandra Club, eMelbourne

<http://www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM00052b.htm> (accessed 24.6.2019)

The Alexandra Club

<https://www.alexandraclub.com.au/about/history-of-the-club/> (accessed 24.6.2019)

Goad, P & Willis, J., 2012, *The Encyclopaedia of Australian Architecture*, Cambridge University Press

Taylor, J 'Australian Architecture since 1960': 22

National Trust of Victoria, Australia, 2014, Melbourne's Marvellous Modernism, A Comparative Analysis of Post-War Modern Architecture in Melbourne's CBD, 1955 -1975

PREVIOUS STUDIES

**Central Activities District
Conservation Study 1985** D

**Central City Heritage
Review 1993** C

**Review of Heritage
overlay listings in the
CBD 2002** D

**Central City Heritage
Review 2011** C

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Former Royal Automobile Club of Victoria

PS ref no: HO1068XXXX





What is significant?

The former Royal Automobile Club of Victoria building ([RACV](#)) at 111-129 Queen Street, Melbourne, completed in 1961 and designed by Bates Smart McCutcheon.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- ~~†~~The building's original external form, materials and detailing; ~~and~~
- ~~†~~The building's high level of integrity to its original design.

~~Later~~ Alterations ~~that occurred after 2004, particularly at street level,~~ are not significant.

How it is significant?

The former Royal Automobile Club of Victoria building at 111-129 Queen Street is of historical, representative, aesthetic, social and associative significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

The former Royal Automobile Club of Victoria building is historically significant as the headquarters of the large and influential RACV who were advocates for the rights of motorists, including the spending of significant public money on infrastructure for motorised transport. ~~In the 1950s and 60s~~ ~~†~~The RACV ~~was~~ ~~is~~ highly influential in the promotion of tourism in Victoria. (Criterion A)

The former Royal Automobile Club of Victoria building is a fine example of a recreational club in the city centre. Built in 1961, and designed by noted ~~modernist~~ ~~Modernist~~ architects Bates Smart McCutcheon, it expresses its function through the glazed lower floors for ~~semi~~-public use and the masonry-clad ~~residential~~ tower ~~containing accommodation~~ above. ~~In design it~~ ~~It~~ is a relatively early example of a modern tower departing from the ~~glazed~~ curtain wall of the 1950s. Its construction program was purportedly an early example of the fast-track method that enabled construction to commence concurrently with detailed design. (Criterion D)

The former Royal Automobile Club of Victoria building is aesthetically significant for its composition, of which the ~~three~~~~two~~-storey ~~transparent~~ cantilevered podium is a notable feature. ~~Despite some~~ ~~a~~Alterations ~~that~~ have ~~reduced this architectural effect, but its form and detailing are filled in the~~ ~~undercroft, the podium is~~ still legible. Other attributes of aesthetic value include the ~~main-visible~~ structural ~~columns visible in a recessed glass clerestorey window above the podium piers supporting the~~ ~~tower~~ and the butterfly roof ~~over~~~~of~~ the tower block. (Criterion E)

The former Royal Automobile Club of Victoria building is of social significance for its strong and long-standing association with the RACV Club members, staff and board. Designed as a central city meeting place for members, the club facilities served as a place ~~of social congregation~~ for RACV members ~~to~~ ~~socialise~~ for more than 45 years. Members used the Club as a place ~~for~~~~to~~ ~~conduct~~ business and for personal celebrations and events, resulting in a strong and continuing sense of connection to the ~~premises-building~~ even after the club had moved to ~~its~~ new premises. (Criterion G)

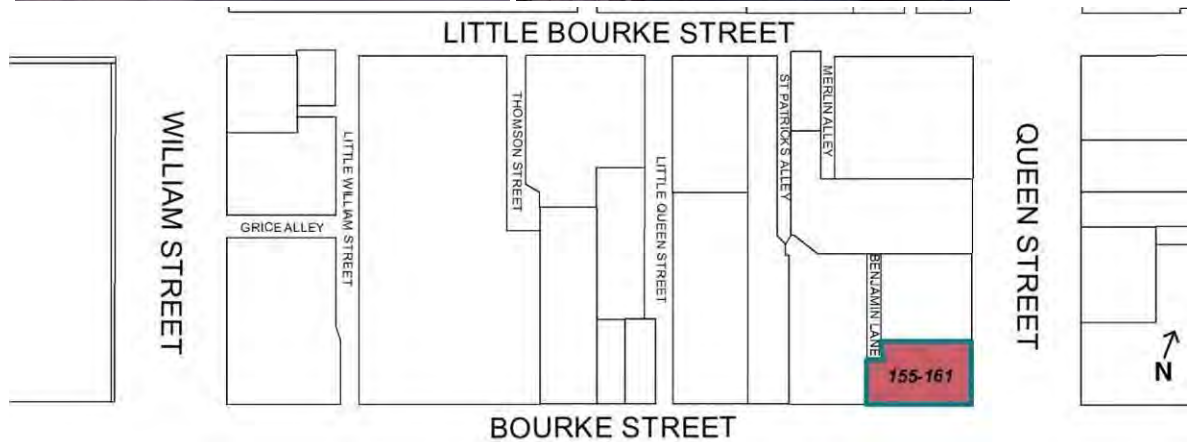
The former Royal Automobile Club of Victoria building is ~~historically~~ significant as the headquarters of the State's premier road lobbyist, as a major tourism promoter, and as a private club serving

Melbourne's business, professional and social elite that has hosted many significant political and public events for more than four decades. It has remained a highly influential organisation over several decades with many amongst its wide membership also highly influential within Victorian society. (Criterion H)

Primary source

~~[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\)](#)~~ [Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\) \(updated March 2022\)](#)

SITE NAME	Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building
STREET ADDRESS	155-161 Queen Street, Melbourne
PROPERTY ID	108071



SURVEY DATE: March 2019

SURVEY BY: Context

HERITAGE INVENTORY

N/A

EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY

No

PLACE TYPE

Individual Heritage Place

PROPOSED CATEGORY

Significant

FORMER GRADE

C

DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:

Bates Smart & McCutcheon

BUILDER:

Costain, Hansen & Yuncken

DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:

Postwar Period (1945-1975)

DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:

1961-62

THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations.	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POST WAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style 1.9 Beyond the curtain wall
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Business and finance

LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LANDUSE	
1890s	Offices
1920s	Offices
1960s	Offices

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Extent of overlay: Refer to map

SUMMARY

The former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building at 155-161 Queen Street is a 13-storey postwar office building, constructed in 1961-62 by Costain, Hansen & Yuncken to a design by Bates Smart & McCutcheon for the South British Insurance Company. It has been used for offices since 1962.

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

Beyond the curtain wall

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding, screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

Business and finance in the postwar period

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17). Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

SITE HISTORY

Prior to the construction of the subject building, its site, part of Crown Allotment 8, Block 19, was occupied by a series of buildings that ranged from two to five storeys. The buildings at the corner of the site, at the intersection of Bourke and Queen streets, were known as the Sun Buildings, built by 1895, in which year the subject site was addressed as 448-450 Bourke Street (Mahlstedt Map Section 1, no 16, 1925; CoMMaps).

The subject building was completed for the South British Insurance Company Ltd in 1962 (See Figure 1). Architects Bates Smart & McCutcheon were responsible for the design and engineering of the building, and Costain, Hansen & Yuncken were the builders (*Cross Section* 1962:3). The building was completed at a cost of £370,000 (*Cross Section* 1962:3).

The South British Insurance Company was founded in New Zealand in 1872 as the South British Fire & Marine Insurance Company of New Zealand, issuing their first policy in August of that year (Aviva 2019). By 1906, the company offered insurance policies across most sectors, including accident insurance, while maintaining their interests in maritime risks. In 1907, the company introduced its first motor insurance policy, a reflection of an increase in car ownership at the time. In 1907, the company was incorporated to become the South British Insurance Company Ltd (Aviva 2019).

By 1886, the South British Insurance Company Ltd had established branches in almost every major city in Australia, and was beginning to acquire other insurance companies, such as the Commercial

Insurance Company of Australia. The firm was registered at 11 Queen Street, Melbourne, by 1889, and in 1908 it purchased a site in Queen Street where it planned to build an office for £20,000 (Aviva 2019).

After the 1967 takeover of Australian Capital Assurance Ltd, the South British Insurance Company Ltd the company continued to grow, establishing branches in many Australian regional cities, as well as internationally (Aviva 2019).

The South British Insurance Company Ltd amalgamated with the New Zealand Insurance Company Ltd in 1981, at which point the firm was named the New Zealand South British Group Ltd. In 1984, New Zealand South British changed its name to the NZI Corporation Ltd, which was acquired by the General Accident Fire & Life Assurance Corporation in 1989, which the Aviva Group took over in 2002 (Aviva 2019).

When it opened in 1962, the building was described by the architecture journal, *Cross Section*:

In the trend from slick glass curtain wall cladding to more heavily modelled facades there will come a stage in which development becomes decadence. This building may bring about the fall, not because it is itself decadent, but because there are few architectural firms that can attempt this sort of surface enrichment and get away with it. South British succeeds by tasteful choice of colour and texture and by the consistent articulation of the different elements of the facade as separate entities. The cruciform white artificial stone panels (each 11 feet high and weighing half a ton) are delineated floor-by-floor by a continuous band of black vitreous tiles, and a small gap between adjacent units prevents the facade from tending to assume a monolithic character. The Skidmore Owings & Merrill design for a building in Brussels has a comparable system of articulated panels, but in the SOM design these panels were also the structural system — and this is where the danger lies, that in using a motif that began as a structural concept as a device for getting "expression" into wall cladding, caprice and whimsicality may oust common sense and sound design. The ground floor of South British is devoted to a luxurious lift lobby and some very good planting and landscaping. Air conditioning: low velocity to central zone, individually controlled high velocity induction units around the perimeter (Cross Section 1962:3).

The planting and landscaping referred to in the article in *Cross Section* and seen in Figure 2 was removed in 1975 as part of substantial remodelling work carried out to the building at this time. The illuminated roof of this section of the building, also seen in Figure 2, was also removed as part of the 1975 work (MBAI 45891). Other work to the building consisted of the construction of internal partitions to the offices at varying times (MBAI). The building was auctioned in 1986, when it was described in a sales notice as 'a prominent city building in the heart of the commercial district'. It was refurbished in 1988 (*Age* 4 December 1986:31; 28 March 1988:32).