



Figure 1. South British Insurance building, corner of Bourke and Queen Streets, 1961. (Source: Sievers 1961, SLV copyright)



Figure 2. The entrance to the subject building as it appeared when it was built in 1961-62. (Source: Sievers 1961, SLV copyright)

The building has been used as offices, with multiple tenants in addition to the South British Insurance Company. By 1965, the building was tenanted by the offices of the Home Insurance Company, Harford Fire Insurance, a values assessor, the head office of Alcoa of Australia Pty Ltd (located in the building from 1962), and a shipping agency. All these firms were still present in 1970 (S&Mc 1965, 1970; *Age* 20 June 1962:22). By 1974, of this tenant group only the South British Insurance Company and the value assessor remained (S&Mc 1974). By 1977 the building was tenanted by Mutual Permanent Building Society and an image of the subject site can be seen in an advertisement from that time (see Figure 3). South British Insurance Company remained at the site until at least 1977 (*Age* 15 November 1977:7, *Age* 1 January 1977:41).

Since the mid-1990s, the building has been used as offices by multiple tenants, including accountants, solicitors and employment agencies (*Age* 1 November 1995:33; *Age* 27 September 1996:7; *Age* 1 August 1998:125). It is currently occupied by 19 businesses and four shops (CoMMaps).



Figure 3. The subject site, as it appeared in advertisements for the Mutual Permanent Building Society. (Source: *Age* 15 November 1977:7)

#### *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 was 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).

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 their original buildings, and 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, 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 160 Queen Street Melbourne (also designed by BSM), 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).

#### *Costain, Hansen & Yuncken, builders*

Otto Yuncken was born in Lyndoch, South Australia in 1865 and trained as a carpenter under his German-born father. Together they built simple structures in the Barossa Valley before Otto left for Port Adelaide at the age of 18 (Carland 2009). By 1885 Yuncken had moved to Melbourne and taken up work with Clements Langford, one of the city's largest building companies. During his time with Clements Langford, Yuncken studied at the Working Men's College and attained first class in architectural drawing and carpentry (Carland 2009). After leaving Clements Langford, Yuncken partnered with Lauritz Hansen in 1918 to form Hansen & Yuncken (Hansen Yuncken 2019).

In 1962-63, the firm Hansen & Yuncken became Costain, Hansen & Yuncken Ltd (*Cross Section* 1 April 1963:1; NSW State Records 741116).

Hansen & Yuncken was responsible for some of Melbourne's 'most memorable buildings' (Carland 2009). Earlier works include the Collingwood Football Club Grandstand, the Port Authority building in Market Street (Carland 2009). The firm was responsible for renovations to Myer buildings and constructed the new spires at St. Patrick's Cathedral. The company also devised an innovative suspended scaffold to replaster the domed ceiling at the State Library of Victoria (Carland 2009).

The company exists today as Hansen Yuncken and has built many notable structures over the past decade, including the Myponga Dam (1959), The Alfred Hospital (1969-77) and Council House 2 for the City of Melbourne (2006) (Hansen Yuncken 2019).

#### **SITE DESCRIPTION**

The former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building at 155-161 Queen Street is a 13-storey commercial building in the Post-War Modernist style, designed by Bates Smart & McCutcheon and constructed in 1961-62. Located on the northwest corner of Queen Street and Bourke Street, it also has rear access to Benjamin Lane.

With its use of nonloadbearing precast concrete panels incorporating fixed vertical glazing and recessed transoms as the main cladding material, it is a later example of the style that developed in the 1960s which moved away from the use of modular aluminium frame glass curtain wall systems to more heavily articulated and three dimensional façade systems. The facades to both Queen Street and Bourke Street comprise vertical modules of recessed glazing and opaque transom panels set between concrete (referred to in the 1962 *Cross Section* article as 'artificial stone') mullions or 'pilasters' that are disconnected at each floor level to create a horizontal shadow line that also forms a continuous narrow band to demarcate each floor level. The building demonstrates the overall design aesthetic of the Post-War Modernist style which is based on repetitive horizontal and vertical modules. The building has no formal termination or parapet at the top level, as is typical of the style.

The original concrete peripheral columns of the main structural grid are extant at street level, however the original high undercroft area with its glazed entry lobby and garden set back within a colonnade (see Figure 2) have been replaced with contemporary shopfronts with an angled set back frontage to the corner surmounted by a projecting cantilevered box awning added to the Bourke Street frontage.

### **INTEGRITY**

The former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building is largely intact with some changes visible to original or early fabric.. Above the street level, the building retains its original modular pattern of fenestration, and the materiality of the precast panels with their recessed window openings and transom panels set between concrete 'pilasters' appears as originally constructed.

At ground level, the original set back glazed entry lobby and garden have been replaced, and the undercroft area infilled with contemporary shopfronts and a projecting cantilevered box awning. Such alterations at ground level are common within Hoddle Grid. Overall 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 the late 1950s through into the 1970s and even beyond, the Post-War Modernist style enjoyed widespread popularity, particularly for medium 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, a greater range of materials such as precast concrete panels were used to achieve variety of expression.

The following examples are comparable with the former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building at 155-161 Queen Street, being of a similar use, scale, style and/or construction date.

#### **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*



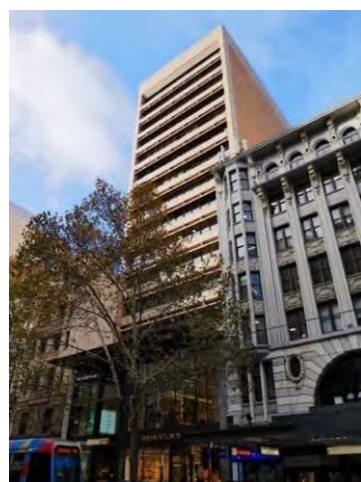
Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



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)



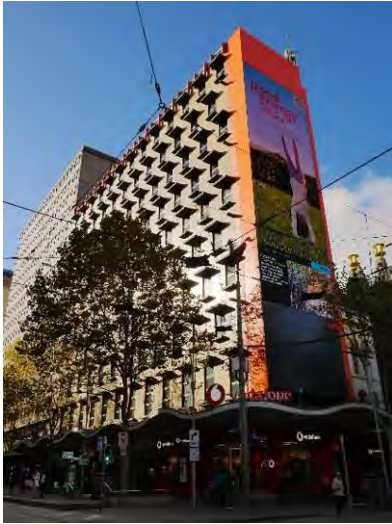
Office Building, 178-188 William Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1972-73)



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)



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 South British Insurance Company Ltd Building at 155-161 Queen Street is comparable to a number of central Melbourne buildings included – or proposed for inclusion – in the HO including the Scottish Amicable building at 126-146 Queen Street (HO1213) and the Royal Insurance Group building at 430-442 Collins Street (Interim HO1010). The buildings 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. However, unlike the other HO examples, the subject building lacks the Bauhaus inspired minimalism and geometric clarity.

The VHR and HO listed Victorian State Offices at 1 Macarthur Street and 1 Treasury Place (H1526, HO174 Treasury Reserve Precinct) constructed in 1969, are also comparable to 155-161 Queen Street in terms of scale and architectural style. Both the subject building and the Victorian State Offices use multiple narrow precast concrete panels incorporating the window modules to create a

three dimensionality to the composition. Also designed by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, the Macarthur Street/Treasury Place group of buildings is however more sophisticated and geometrically resolved in their innovative use of precast concrete cladding.

155-161 Queen Street is also comparable to 158-164 Queen Street which has been assessed as individually significant as part of the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review. Both buildings were designed by Bates Smart & McCutcheon and demonstrate a refined use of modular precast concrete panels that became popular during the 1960s, to create a three dimensionality to the composition. 151-155 Queen Street is an earlier example of this technique.

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**ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA**


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

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

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

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

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

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

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**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).

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

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**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*

Age, as cited.

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**PREVIOUS STUDIES**

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**Central Activities District  
Conservation Study 1985** D

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 1993** C

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

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011** Ungraded

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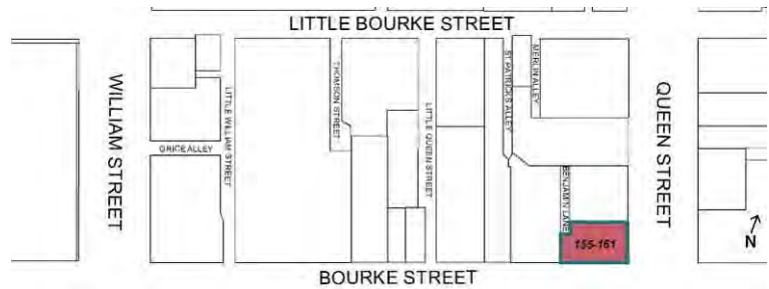


## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building



**PS ref no:** HO [1368XXXX](#)



### What is significant?

The former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building at 155-161 Queen Street, Melbourne, completed in 1962 to a design by Bates Smart and McCutcheon, ~~is significant~~.

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

- [The building's original building-external](#) form and scale; ~~and~~
- [e](#)Original non-loadbearing precast concrete curtain wall cladding including recessed window openings and transom panels set between concrete 'pilasters'.

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

### How it is significant?

The former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building at 155-161 Queen Street is of historical, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

The former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building, designed and engineered by Bates Smart & McCutcheon and constructed in 1961-62, is historically significant for the evidence it provides of the rapid growth of corporate architecture in 1950s-60s' Melbourne 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 South British Insurance Company Ltd Building is significant historically as a reflection of the growth of insurance and assurance companies in Victoria during the 1950s-60s, cementing Melbourne's

pre-eminent role in the state for financial institutions. The South British Insurance Company owned and occupied the building from 1962 to 1977. (Criterion A)

The former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building is significant as a largely 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 subject building exhibits the key characteristics of the style, including its non-loadbearing precast concrete curtain wall cladding, recessed window openings and transom panels set between concrete 'pilasters'. (Criterion D)

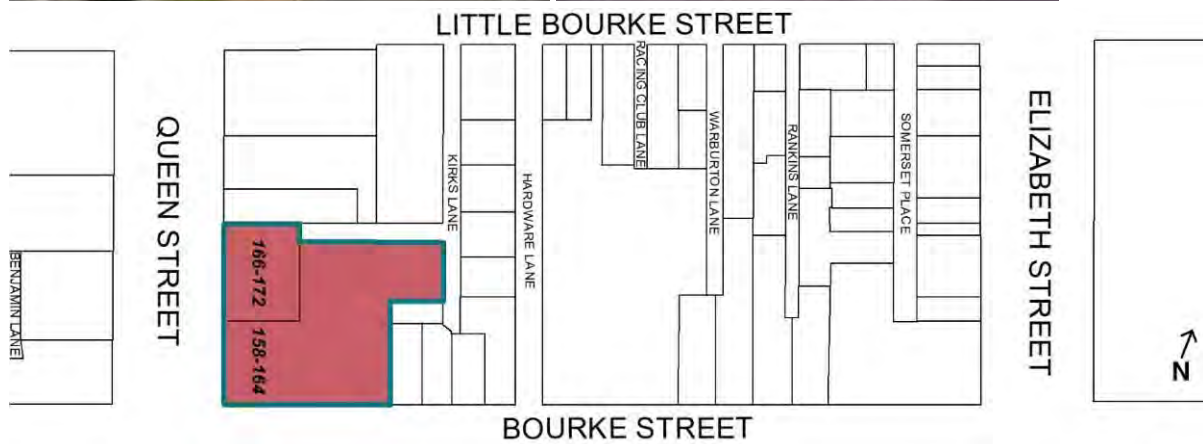
The former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building is aesthetically significant as a refined and substantial example of the later development in curtain wall design constructed during the 1960s when a mix of materials was utilised to create a greater modularity and three-dimensional quality to the facades. Its aesthetic significance lies in the retention of the fine detailing of its facades to both Queen Street and Bourke Street, where vertical modules of recessed glazing and opaque transom panels set between concrete mullions or 'pilasters' that are disconnected at each floor level create a horizontal shadow line and give a refined modularity to the facade. (Criterion E)

#### **Primary source**

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

<b>SITE NAME</b>	Former Sleigh Buildings (H C Sleigh Building & former Sleigh Corner)
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	158-172 Queen Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	108107 & 108108



<b>SURVEY DATE:</b>	March 2019	<b>SURVEY BY:</b>	Context
<b>HERITAGE INVENTORY</b>	N/A	<b>EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY</b>	No
<b>PLACE TYPE</b>	Individual Heritage Place	<b>PROPOSED CATEGORY</b>	Significant
		<b>FORMER GRADE</b>	C
<b>DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:</b>	Bates Smart & McCutcheon	<b>BUILDER:</b>	Hansen & Yuncken Pty Ltd (166-172)
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	1953-1955 (166-172) 1964 (158-164)

## 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	Retail, Warehouses
1920s	Retail, Warehouses
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 Sleigh buildings were built for HC Sleigh Ltd, founders of Golden Fleece petrol and service stations. The first building of eight storeys, the H C Sleigh Building, was constructed in 1953-55 at 166-172 Queen Street. It was occupied by HG Sleigh Ltd from 1955-65. Requiring new premises, a larger 15-storey building was constructed in 1964 for the company on the adjoining corner site at 158-164 Queen Street, the Sleigh Corner Building (now known as Elders House). HC Sleigh remained at the 1964 building until 1981. Both buildings were designed by Bates Smart & McCutcheon in the Post-War Modernist style, which is differently expressed in the architecture of each building. 158-164 Queen Street retains its original publicly accessible plaza with sculpture 'Transformation' created by sculptor Tom Bass. Both buildings are used as offices, with 158-164 Queen Street occupied by Elders since 1983.

## 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, part of Crown Allotment 1, Block 20, was occupied at least by 1866. By 1888, on the land today known as 158-172 Queen Street, there were seven two-storey shops along Queen Street and two two-storey buildings and a larger scale complex known as Clarke's Buildings along Bourke Street. Clarke's Buildings comprised a four-storey main building fronting Bourke Street and three three-storey warehouses at the rear. By 1910, the rear area fronting Kirks Lane was further built with two three-storey warehouses developed for the Clarke's Buildings (Fels, Lavelle & Mider 1993, Inventory no 466; Mahlstedt Map, section 1, no 20, 1888; section 1, no 13, 1910).

All these buildings were noted as still being present in 1925 (Mahlstedt Map Section 1, no 13, 1925).

#### *H C Sleigh Building, 166-172 Queen Street, constructed 1953-55*

Four two-storey Victorian-era shops at 166-172 Queen Street were demolished immediately before the construction of the current building (*Argus* 7 September 1955:13).

The H C Sleigh Building was built 1953-55 as an office block for H C Sleigh Ltd to a design by architects Bates Smart & McCutcheon by builders Hansen & Yuncken Pty Ltd (*Argus* 7 September 1955:13).

In anticipation of its construction, the building was described as the 'first postwar' city office block to be constructed in Melbourne by a private company (*Herald* 14 August 1953:9). Construction of the building was delayed because of the postwar shortage of building materials and a subsequent freeze on the construction of large buildings (*Herald* 14 August 1953:9).

The building at 166-172 Queen Street was initially designed to be seven storeys, with two basements for parking, when the provision of on-site parking was understood as 'the modern overseas practice'. The design allowed for the addition of a further three floors to eventually provide 10 floors above ground level, at the 40 metre (132-foot) height limit (*Herald* 14 August 1953:9). The construction was to be carried out with reinforced concrete walls with hollow block concrete floors. The façade of the subject building was to be characterised by its 'flush granite plinth and terra cotta surround' and 'projecting stone grid containing recessed aluminium windows and metal spandrels' (see Figure 1) (*Herald* 14 August 1953:9).

By 1955, the H C Sleigh Building was eventually completed as an eight-storey building (see Figure 2). The planned height-limit additions were never carried out. H C Sleigh Ltd left the premises to move into a new building on the neighbouring site erected at 158-164 Queen Street in 1964.



Figure 1. A drawing of the building as published in the *Herald* newspaper in 1953 before construction had begun. Note the elevation comprises seven levels. (Source: *Herald* 14 August 1953:9)



Figure 2. The building as it was soon after construction, faced in blue tiles. The building was actually constructed to be eight stories, rather than the initial seven. (Source: 'HC Sleigh and Co, 1957, NAA)



When the H C Sleigh Building was completed in 1955, the *Argus* reported on its use of innovative architecture and the scale of the undertaking:

*The new H C Sleigh Building represents not only the heart and brain of an organisation which grew into something vast from the first courageous ideas of a small Melbourne businessman who set out 50 years ago as "an agent." Its official opening today marks not just the triumph of his initiative and drive. It marks also a triumph in the thinking, designing and planning by Australian architects; a triumph in building by the men who build buildings: a triumph in resolving threatening industrial quarrels before the quarrel really begins: a triumph in getting building materials to the building site on time. Everyone has "teamed up", on this job, and they have done mighty well. Outside appearance of the building is deceptive. It looks more squat than it is. Its squarish lines break down true concept of its height. First impression is of acres of glass, silvering glints of aluminium bluish tiles. The more observant of those who look at it from the street note the absence of artificial lights burning in daytime. The answer? At least three-quarters of, its eastern and western walls, are of glass, and whatever inner walls or partitions it needs are of glass, and glass has been used everywhere possible to bring in natural lighting. A similar impression is made when one enters the building because there is an air of spaciousness and of easy lighting. There is an air too, of quietness and of dignity. The ground floor embraces the shipping and main business offices which clients need to enter. Keen colours and attractive mural decorations, growing flowers, comfortable furniture, all tend to make it easier for the stranger entering the building. The upper floors accommodate the various office staffs, and the overall pattern is the same - comfort, good lighting, a variety of colouring to break monotony. Where large staffs have had to be accommodated large rooms with sound proofed ceilings have been provided. Offices for executives have been built along the side walls, but they have not been shut off from the main rooms. Their walls are low partition walls of fluted glass, and they have no doors so that an atmosphere of easy access can be encouraged. The upper floors house an excellent canteen, a theatre with equipment to show films or to be used as a conference room. The roof will have its garden in time, and-space for recreation. It carries a two-bed roomed flat for the building's caretaker - which would be the envy of many married people - equipped with all that one would want, tastefully coloured, convenient in every way. The rooms for the managerial staff and the board and for all senior executives are a mixture of luxury, dignity and austerity. They are not elaborate, but they are comfortable and excellent.*

*The building was completed in what is thought to be record time for anything comparable to it in Melbourne...Planning had been wise; industrial troubles were handled quickly and easily and amicably, and because of the diversity of its activities, H C Sleigh Ltd., for whom the building was being constructed, was able to get materials on site on time for the builders. Whatever of the 325 tons of structural steel and the 140 tons of reinforcing steel could not be bought in Australia was imported. Cement and glass were readily available. There was no shortage of labour and 130 skilled and unskilled men were employed at the peak of the work. Co-operation between Sleigh's, the architects, the builders, the sub-contractors, the unions, the workmen was excellent all the way through, and the building went on to schedule... (Argus 7 September 1955:13).*

When the building was constructed, the façade was clad in blue tiles (see Figure 2). These have since been removed, most likely after 1993; removal of tiles or the repainting of the building are not noted in the building permit card for the site (MBAI).

The H C Sleigh Building's primary use has been as professional offices from its opening year of 1955. H C Sleigh occupied the building from 1955 until 1964. The company then moved into a new building, also designed by architects Bates Smart & McCutcheon, which it erected next door at 158-164 Queen Street (known as 160 Queens Street) (S&Mc 1955; National Trust 2014:49). The building at 158-164 Queen Street is discussed below. The building at 166-172 Queen Street was occupied in the years that followed by various law firms, stockbrokers and shipping agents (S&Mc 1965, 1970, 1974). The Australian Guarantee Corporation and Traders Finance Corporation were both occupants of the building from at least 1965 to 1974 (S&Mc 1965, 1974).

CPA Australia was the tenant of the building by 1991 (*Age* 16 September 1991:22). The building was refurbished in 1991, and advertised for sale as CPA House in 1999 (*Age* 4 September 1999:96; CoMMaps 2019).

The building at 166-172 Queen Street is currently tenanted by 11 businesses, one shop and one food and drink outlet (CoMMaps 2019).

#### *Former Sleigh Corner, 158-164 Queen Street, constructed 1964*

In the 1960s, the Victorian-era shops and all structures that formed part of the Clarke's Buildings were demolished, to make way for the second H C Sleigh building at 158-164 Queen Street (Mahlstedt Map section 1, no 13, 1948).

The building at 158-164 Queen Street was constructed as the new headquarters for H C Sleigh Ltd in 1963-64 (Figure 3), with architects Bates Smart & McCutcheon again responsible for the design (as seen in Figure 4) (National Trust 2014:49). The building at 158-164 Queen Street, referred to as Sleigh Corner, was in use by February 1964 and was officially opened by the Honourable H E Bolte, MLA, Premier of Victoria in March 1964 (National Trust 2014:38; *Age* 12 March 1964:11).



Figure 3. The subject building during construction. The sign on the scaffolding is advertising the site as the new headquarters for H C Sleigh. (Source: Sievers 1963, NLA)

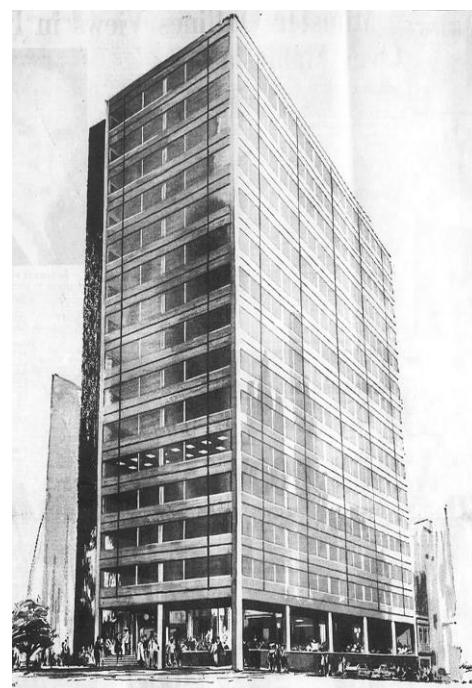


Figure 4. An illustration of the H C Sleigh Ltd building after its opening in March 1964. (Source: Age 12 March 1964:11)

H C Sleigh Ltd's decision to erect an office building almost double the size of its previous location within a decade indicates the company's prosperity and growth at the time when, by 1964, the H C Sleigh Ltd group of companies operated two monthly passenger and cargo services to Hong Kong and Japan; exported goods to the value of £7,000,000 in 1963; owned 2000 Golden Fleece service stations across Australia; operated ocean tankers for transporting crude oil for refining into Golden Fleece petroleum products; owned Sleigh Exploration, which was actively engaged in the search for oil in Australia; and owned the Hardie Rubber Company and Climatedmaster Engineering Pty Ltd, which manufactured and installed heating and cooling equipment (Age 12 March 1964:11).

From 1964, the provision of a plaza space within the curtilages of new high-rise buildings became apparent in the City of Melbourne, as a result of the introduction of the site plot ratios (or floor area ratios) control that remained until 1999. A portion of the subject building incorporates a plaza, and the rear wall of the plaza that forms part of the building's original design features a sculpture by Tom Bass, named 'Transformation', installed at the same time of the building's construction in 1963-64 (see Figure 6) (Melbourne Art Critic 2019). Bates Smart & McCutcheon collaborated with Bass in earlier projects at 43-51 Queen Street (1958) (assessed as part of this study) and Wilson Hall for the University of Melbourne (1956) (Goad 2012:73).

Reflecting the popularity of the 'Featurist' approach from the late 1950s and to the mid-1960s, the original exterior featured a combination of various ornamental features including grey-blue ceramic tiling, gold glass tiling and wall panels 'of reconstructed stone surfaced with crushed porcelain, through [sic] into relief by recessed bands of black ceramic mosaic' (Architecture in Australia April 1967:256; as cited in National Trust 2014:38). The original cladding has been removed, except for the rough stone surfaced wall panels.

H C Sleight Ltd's development of the Queen Street area extended to the planting of trees in 1959 in the centre of Queen Street, in conjunction with the ANZ Bank (Figure 5). These trees have since been replaced with plane trees.

The subject building at 158-164 Queen Street also incorporates a four-storey building facing Kirks Lane, at the rear of the 1964 structure. This building appears as a four-storey car park in a 1960s map (see Figure 7). The only reference that can be found to building works on this site is a 1970 advertisement placed by builders Hansen & Yuncken for carpenters to undertake formwork at the H C Sleight site in Kirks Lane (*Age* 30 July 1970:18). It is possible that the car park was reconfigured into an office building at this time. No other information could be found about the Kirks Lane building.

H C Sleight Ltd was the main occupier of the building at 158-164 Queen Street from 1964 to 1981 (S&Mc 1965, 1974; *Age* 14 March 1981:84). Other long-term office tenancies included the Department of Labour and Industry (1966-1980), which used offices to house its Divisional Technical Service, its Industrial Appeals Court, and its Chief Engineer; Avon Cosmetics (1965-1970); Western Assurance Co (1970-1974); and Tubemakers of Australia (1970-1974) (S&Mc 1965, 1970, 1974).

The building was occupied by three honorary consular offices, Monaco, Finland and Belgium, between 1965 and 1974 (S&Mc 1965, 1970, 1974). Hamilton Sleight, whose company H C Sleight Ltd constructed the building, was the Vice-Consul of Finland in Victoria in May 1925 (*Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* 7 May 1925:761). The location of the Finnish consular office in the Sleight Corner building between 1965 and 1974 reflects Sleight's role (S&Mc 1965, 1970).

By 1983, the building's main occupant was rural services business, Elders Ltd (*Age* 23 April 1983:105). After arriving in Adelaide from Scotland in 1839 to extend his family's merchant and shipping business, Thomas Elder formed Elder, Stirling & Co in Adelaide with Edward Stirling, Robert Barr Smith, and John Taylor in 1855. When Stirling and Taylor retired in 1863, Barr Smith and Thomas Elder formed Elder Smith and Co. In 1888 Elder Smith and Co was amalgamated with its subsidiary Elder's Wool & Produce Co Ltd, established in 1882, to form Elder Smith & Co Ltd. By 1915, Elders operated branches and wool stores in all major rural areas, and by 1939, the company had offices in Adelaide, Perth, Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Geelong and London, as well as 38 country branches in South Australia, 25 in Western Australia, and two in New South Wales (Elders 2019).

After the recession during the World War Two, the company expanded through the 1964 amalgamation with Goldsbrough Mort and acquisition of businesses during the 1970s and 80s. In 1989, due to an economic downturn, Elders sold Henry Jones IXL to The J M Smucker Co, and was renamed Elders Limited (Elders 2019). In 1995, the Futuris Corporation became the new owner, and in 1997 Elders launched Australian Wool Handlers as a joint venture, a wool handling and dumping company that quickly became responsible for more than 60 per cent of the national clip (Elders 2109).

Elders still occupies the building today as its state office and operates real estate and insurance services from the building (Elders 2019).

The building is currently occupied by 29 businesses and three shops (CoMMaps).



Figure 5. "Transformation" by Tom Bass, on the Queen Street facade of the subject building. (Source: Context 2019)



Figure 6. Showing the plaque marking the planting of trees in Queen Street by H C Sleigh and the ANZ Bank in 1959. (Source: Context 2019).



Figure 7. Showing the four-storey car park in the 1960s (outlined in red), which may have formed the structure for the four-storey building incorporated as part of 158-164 Queen Street c1970. (Source: Mahstedt Map section 1, no 13, 1948, version 6, amended 1960s)

H C Sleigh Ltd was founded by Harold Crofton Sleigh in 1895 (*Herald* 30 June 1947:11). Sleigh, an Englishman, had started work in Australia barging cargo on the Murray and Darling Rivers (Langmore 1988). In 1895, Sleigh started a partnership with John McIlwraith, and from their office in Flinders Street won a contract to supply coal to Western Australia. McIlwraith retired from partnership not long after, and Sleigh continued to develop the company, winning another contract with the Western Australian government and taking possession of two brand new ships ordered specifically for the company from Glasgow (Langmore 1988).

In 1913, the company took possession of a cargo of petrol, which the original consignee was unable to pay for. This was to take the company in a different direction, with H C Sleigh registering the

product as 'Golden Fleece'. The company experienced a rapid increase in its oil importing interests during World War One and the 1920s, by which time Sleigh had set up twenty pump stations (Langmore 1988).

The company was eventually taken over by the founder's son, (Sir) Hamilton Sleigh, who sought to expand the holdings of the company (Walsh 2002). Under Hamilton Sleigh's leadership, the company owned subsidiary shipping firms and established facilities to handle the import of petroleum (Walsh 2002). By 1947, the company had also started merchandise and pharmaceutical businesses (*Herald* 30 June 1947:11). H C Sleigh Ltd became a public company in 1947, with an authorised capital of £1,500,000 (Flotilla Australia 2019; *Herald* 30 June 1947:11).

The 1950s saw a change in the petroleum markets, which led to single-brand stations and the rise of competition between companies. H C Sleigh established outlets for Golden Fleece and the company placed a large emphasis on the design of its service stations, establishing the unique merino ram as the company's trademark (Golden Fleece 2019).

By 1981, the company had sold the petroleum department, including Golden Fleece, to Caltex (Golden Fleece 2019). In 1984, the company became Petersville Sleigh, before eventually being sold to BORAL Ltd in 1992 (Delisted Australia 2019).

#### *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 can be traced back to Reed & Barnes, thus making it one of the oldest and, by the 1960s, 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 constructed in 1955, breaking 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 their original buildings, and 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, 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), 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).

*Hansen & Yuncken, builders (164-172 Queen Street)*

Otto Yuncken was born in Lyndoch, South Australia in 1865 and trained as a carpenter under his German-born father. Together they built simple structures in the Barossa Valley before Otto left for Port Adelaide at the age of 18 (Carland 2009). By 1885 Yuncken had moved to Melbourne and taken up work with Clements Langford, one of the city's largest building companies. During his time with Clements Langford, Yuncken studied at the Working Men's College and attained first class in architectural drawing and carpentry (Carland 2009). After leaving Clements Langford, Yuncken partnered with Lauritz Hansen in 1918 to form Hansen & Yuncken (Hansen Yuncken 2019).

The firm was responsible for some of Melbourne's 'most memorable buildings' (Carland 2009). Earlier works include the Collingwood Football Club Grandstand (1892), the Port Authority building (1930) in Market Street (Carland 2009). The firm was responsible for renovations to Myer buildings and constructed the new spires at St. Patrick's Cathedral. The company also devised an innovative suspended scaffold to replaster the domed ceiling at the State Library of Victoria (Carland 2009).

The company still exists today as Hansen Yuncken and has built many notable structures over the past decades, including the Myponga Dam (1959), The Alfred Hospital (1969-1977) and Council House 2 for the City of Melbourne (2006) (Hansen Yuncken 2019).

*Tom Bass, sculptor (158-164 Queen Street)*

A portion of the subject building's wall, the rear wall of the plaza that forms part of the building's original design, features a sculpture by the sculptor Tom Bass.

Tom Bass was a prolific Australian sculptor, who completed many public and private commissions, including the 'Trial of Socrates' at Wilson Hall at the University of Melbourne and another children's sculpture 'Genii' in Queen Victoria Gardens. Bass' community-focused work is featured in many prominent Australian public spaces and institutions, including schools, universities and churches, as well as government and corporate sites. In 1974, Bass established the Tom Bass Sculpture Studio School (still in operation), where he taught until his death in 2010. He was made a Member of the Order of Australia for his contribution to public art. A retrospective of Bass' work was held at the Sydney Opera House, where it was claimed that 'no artist has done more to shape the face of public art in Australia' (Brown 2010; Design and Art Australia 2011).

Bass was also responsible for the 'Children's Tree' sculpture in the forecourt of 308-336 Collins Street, Melbourne (former Colonial Mutual Life Building), which has also been assessed as part of the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review.

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

The site 158-172 Queen Street comprises two postwar office buildings developed for H C Sleigh Pty Ltd to a design by architects Bates Smart & McCutcheon.

*H C Sleigh Building, 166-172 Queen Street, constructed 1953-55*

The H C Sleigh Building at 166-172 Queen Street is an eight-storey commercial building in the Post-War Modernist style, designed by Bates, Smart & McCutcheon and constructed in 1953-55. Located on the eastern side of Queen Street between Bourke Street and Little Bourke Street, the building has a secondary frontage accessed off Kirks Lane at the rear.

The principal facade to Queen Street comprises a primary nonloadbearing aluminium frame curtain wall, which dominates the façade from the first to the seventh floors, over a secondary asymmetric solid form of painted render (probably over non loadbearing brickwork). The masonry form extends around the curtain wall, particularly to the south, where the wide vertical panel is punctuated by small rectangular openings (presumably to the stairwell). The narrow horizontal band immediately below the curtain wall at the first-floor level is clad with white stone, and across the top of the building is a row of seven small projecting studs and a projecting plain rectangular cornice with recessed parapet behind. A pair of flagpoles are located on the roof. The southern wall of the building returns to meet the recessed wall of the later Sleigh Corner building (1964) built next door, creating a plaza space.

The curtain wall is strongly modular, with one module of a slightly vertical proportion per floor and nine equal modules across the façade. The curtain wall section is relatively substantial. Each module is infilled with a single large pane of clear glazing.

At street level, the façade comprises a colonnade, with the main structural columns clad with white stone, and the spaces between the columns infilled with glazed shopfronts. The main entry to the building is at the southern end of the colonnade. The rear (east) elevation, accessed off Kirks Lane, comprises a regular arrangement of windows set within a masonry wall. The windows appear original and include openable sashes.

When it was first constructed in 1953-55, the building was known as the H C Sleigh Building, and was notable for its '...acres of glass, silvering glints of aluminium bluish tiles' amongst other characteristics of the new modernism appearing in central Melbourne. The building was refurbished in 1991. In its original configuration, each module of the main curtain wall included an opaque horizontal lower panel, with clear glazing above divided into four equal square sashes (refer figure 2), which have now been replaced with a single large pane of clear glazing. At street level, the original configuration also included multipane window modules above a solid masonry plinth, now replaced with a colonnade and shopfronts. The painted render masonry sections of the secondary form of the building were originally clad in blue tiles, but these have been removed. Originally the building had no formal termination or parapet at the top level, as is typical of the style, so the simple cornice and other details have been added.

*Former Sleigh Corner, 158-164 Queen Street, constructed 1964*

The former Sleigh Corner building at 158-164 Queen Street is a 15-storey pre-cast concrete and steel curtain wall corner building, constructed in 1964. Designed by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, it has a narrow frontage to Queen Street and deeper frontage to Bourke Street. With its use of applied concrete panels over an expressed structural system, it is a fine example of the Post-War Modernist style that developed in the 1960s when the style moved away from the use of uniform glass curtain wall systems to more heavily modulated facades giving a three-dimensional quality to the buildings.



The primary façade facing Queen Street is structurally divided into two equal bays with three expressed concrete columns continuing to the ground level. Horizontally proportioned aluminium framed windows divide each bay into three equal sections. The outer section of these bays features a secondary narrow concrete column that rises vertically through the building. Applied white concrete panels sit over the dark grey spandrels and provide a design refinement to the structural grid that emphasises the horizontal. Along Queen Street, at the western end, a recessed lift shaft rises above the main height of the building. Faced in non-load bearing bagged brickwork it provides a contrasting textural element to the building's otherwise precise rectilinear form.

The secondary façade facing Bourke Street is divided into five primary structural bays with columns continuing to ground level. At first floor level the façade is divided into a regular grid pattern utilising the same pattern of applied panels and expressed secondary structure used across the primary facade. The building has no formal termination or parapet at the top level, as is typical of the style.

At ground level the original concrete peripheral columns are extant, as is the recessing of the office foyer shopfronts along both street frontages, although the original shopfronts have been replaced. This recessing of the office foyer and adjacent lift shaft provides one of the few surviving plaza elements along Queen Street which is increasingly rare within the Hoddle Grid.

A Tom Bass sculpture known as 'Transportation' was commissioned by HC Sleigh in 1963 for the plaza. It remains in its original plaza setting attached to the bagged brick wall of the lift shaft. The copper fabrication sculpture displays a winged figure standing on a boat suspended from a pulley possibly representing the shipping and cargo aspects of the business.

## INTEGRITY

The H C Sleigh Building (166-172 Queen Street) has some changes visible to original fabric; however, the building retains important defining characteristics, including its original scale, built form and configuration. Above the ground and first floor levels the building retains its original modular pattern of fenestration, although within each module of the curtain wall the original multipane window sashes and opaque panel have been replaced with a single pane of clear glazing, and at street level a colonnade and shopfronts have replaced the original multipane windows. Alterations include removal of the original blue tiles which were an important aspect of the original design, and the addition of a simple cornice and parapet. Despite these changes the original form and scale of the building, and key characteristics of its architectural style and the period in which it was constructed can be appreciated.

The former Sleigh Corner building (158-164 Queen Street) is highly intact in terms of its external features. Despite the removal of original grey-blue tile cladding, the original non-loadbearing curtain wall with horizontal glazed and applied concrete panels, expressed concrete structure and non-loadbearing bagged brick lift shaft remain extant. The original recessing of the office foyer shopfronts to both street frontages and a publicly accessible plaza created adjacent to the lift shaft remain. The Tom Bass sculpture 'Transportation' also remains in its original location within the plaza. The original shopfronts have been replaced. The building's original built form and scale, some materials and key stylistic details remain clearly legible and overall the place is of very high integrity.

For their ability to express different facets of the Post-War Modernist style and city planning, overall the two buildings are 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 style enjoyed widespread popularity, particularly for 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 some examples, curtain walls were typically fully glazed, while in some other examples, a greater range of materials were used to achieve variety of expression and flexibility of form. Many of these 1950s and 60s office towers featured a notable work of contemporary artwork, either within the foyer area or fixed to the outside of the building, or in some cases within a setback or public plaza.

A group of buildings built in the mid-1950s combined expansive glazed panels with solid masonry sections to achieve a distinctive aesthetic. These compare with the H C Sleigh Building and 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).



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



London Assurance House, 468-470 Bourke Street (Bernard Evans, 1960).



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

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 Sleigh Corner 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)



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



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)



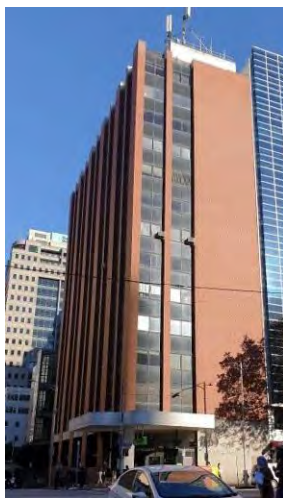
Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128  
William Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim  
HO1180)



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 H C Sleigh Building at 166-172 Queen Street is one of the earliest examples of non-loadbearing curtain wall buildings in Melbourne and contributed to a changing streetscape that included Post-War Modernist buildings alongside buildings from other eras. The building is comparable to a number of central Melbourne buildings that are included or are proposed for inclusion in the HO, including the Gilbert House at 100-104 Collins Street (significant in HO504) and Coates House at 20 Collins Street (HO504), which are noted as the first two buildings in Melbourne that adopted the fully glazed curtain wall façade.

The H C Sleigh Building is also comparable with the former Atlas Assurance Company building at 404-406 Collins Street and Laurens House at 414- 416 Lonsdale Street (all recommended as individually significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review). The main façades in all cases demonstrate 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.

The H C Sleigh Building is particularly comparable with Laurens House, and the former Batman Automatic Exchange at 376-382 Flinders Lane (recommended as individually significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review), as all are examples of the 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.

Designed in 1953, the H C Sleigh Building is particularly notable as a very early example of a curtain-walled office building, which predates the earliest fully glazed example, the Gilbert House, constructed in 1955.

The former Sleigh Corner building at 158-164 Queen Street is comparable to a number of other central Melbourne buildings included – or proposed for inclusion in – the HO including Royal Insurance Group Building at 430-442 Collins Street, the Victorian State Offices at 1 Macarthur Street and 1 Treasury Place (included in the VHR) and the RACV Club at 123 Queen Street.

The former Sleigh Corner building 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 curtain wall systems which maximise access to daylight. In this instance it is representative of a later iteration of the style in which architects moved away from slick glass curtain wall cladding to more heavily modelled facades utilising different materials. It is distinguished by the tall lift shaft clad in bagged non-loadbearing brickwork providing a contrasting textural element to the building's otherwise precise rectilinear form.

Like other buildings of its time and type, former Sleigh Corner building incorporates a street level plaza with a notable work of art. Incorporation of a public plaza within the building setback is characteristic of the era, a result of the plot ratio regime in place between the mid-1960s and 1999. Retention of public artworks in situ is increasingly uncommon. Some inner-city sculptures dating from the 1950s and 60s classified by the National Trust Victoria have been removed from their original locations, often in association with demolition or redevelopment of the building or loss of the plaza. 'Five Low Relief Panels in Bronze' by Pasquale Marinelli (National Trust File Number B6309), at the street level façade of 108 Flinders Street, and 'Birds' by Michael Meszaros (National Trust File Number B6820) at the front set back of 350 St Kilda Road were removed and are no longer publicly accessible.

The sculptural work by Tom Bass is notable. The 'Transportation' sculpture compares in terms of artistic significance as a piece of art within its original publicly accessible location to the 'Children's Tree' sculpture at 308-336 Collins Street which has been recommended as significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review.

The former Sleigh Corner building retains a very high level of integrity above the ground floor and maintains its early foyer shopfront setbacks and garden plaza with original artwork. It compares favourably with other examples of the style in central Melbourne.

As a pair, the two buildings differently express the Post-War Modernist style, and their scale and form express changes in architecture and in city planning.

**ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA**

✓	<p><b>CRITERION A</b> Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).</p>
	<p><b>CRITERION B</b> Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).</p>
	<p><b>CRITERION C</b> Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).</p>
✓	<p><b>CRITERION D</b> Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).</p>
✓	<p><b>CRITERION E</b> Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).</p>
	<p><b>CRITERION F</b> Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)</p>
	<p><b>CRITERION G</b> 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><b>CRITERION H</b> 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**

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**Central Activities District  
Conservation Study 1985**      D (158-164)  
Ungraded (166-172)

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 1993**                      C (158-164)  
C (166-172)

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**Review of Heritage  
overlay listings in the  
CBD 2002**                          Ungraded (158-164 & 166-172)

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011**                      Ungraded (158-164 & 166-172)

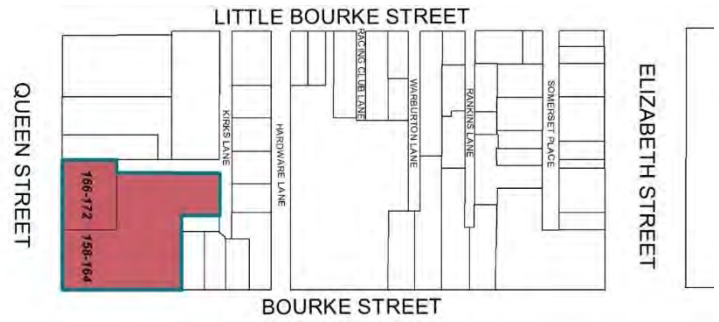
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### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Former Sleigh Buildings (H C Sleigh Building & former Sleigh Corner)



**PS ref no:** HO 1369XXXX





### What is significant?

The former Sleigh Corner building at 158-164 Queen Street, and the former H C Sleigh Building at 166-172 Queen Street, Melbourne, both completed to a design by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, [are significant](#).

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

- [Original building form and scale \(158-164 & 166-172\);](#)
- [Original asymmetric solid painted render form and nonloadbearing curtain wall to its principal \(Queen Street\) façade, square windows to southern end wall \(166-172\);](#)
- [Original masonry wall with fenestration pattern and windows to its rear \(off Kirks Lane\) façade \(166-172\);](#)
- [Original concrete peripheral columns and recessed foyer and shopfronts along both street frontages at ground level \(158-164\);](#)
- [Original non-loadbearing curtain wall, horizontal fenestration pattern, and applied concrete panels, expressed concrete structure and non-loadbearing bagged brick lift shaft \(158-164\);](#)

- ~~Recessed office foyer and adjacent setback lift shaft and plaza (158-164); and~~
- Tom Bass sculpture known as 'Transportation' (1963) in its original plaza setting (158-164).

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

### How it is significant?

The former Sleigh Buildings, comprising the H C Sleigh Building at 166-172 Queen Street, and the former Sleigh Corner, at 158-164 Queen Street, are of local historical, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

The former Sleigh Buildings are historically significant as a part of the postwar development and rapid growth of corporate architecture of the 1950s and 1960s. Located in the financial and commercial precinct of Queen Street, they reflect 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 buildings were built for Australian company H C Sleigh Ltd (estab. 1895), founder of the Golden Fleece brand of petrol and service stations. H C Sleigh owned and occupied the building at 166-172 Queen Street from 1955 to 1964, before moving to their new, purpose-built premises next door at 158-164 Queen Street. The building at 166-172 Queen Street is notable as the first postwar city office block to be constructed in Melbourne for a private company. It is further significant as a very early example of a curtain-walled office building, the design of which predates the earliest fully glazed example (Gilbert House, constructed in 1955), and as an early and well-executed design in the the Post-War Modernist style by noted architectural firm of Bates, Smart & McCutcheon. (Criterion A)

Viewed together, the former Sleigh Buildings highlight the shift away from the earlier use of uniform glass curtain wall systems in the 1950s to a greater three dimensional quality, achieved during the 1960s through the use of assertive textures and precast concrete cladding panels. The two buildings also illustrate the rapid development of the Post-War Modernist style over a decade, from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s, and the enthusiasm with which large corporations embraced the style to reflect their rapid growth and status. At almost twice the height of its eight-storey neighbour at 166-172 Queen Street, and incorporating a publicly accessible plaza, the 15-storey former Sleigh Corner building illustrates the mid-1960s changes in city planning associated with the lifting of the 40 metre (132 foot) height restrictions after 1958. (Criterion A)

The H C Sleigh Building at 166-172 Queen Street is representative of the earlier development of the Post-War Modernist style that prevailed prior to the 1960s abolition of the 40 metre (132 foot) height control that had been in place since 1916. The principal façade to Queen Street exhibits an asymmetrical combination of a solid modernist form, painted but originally blue tiles, with an offset projecting curtain wall which dominates the principal façade and extends from the first to the eighth floor. The building clearly expresses the key characteristics of its style and time of construction through retention of the simple strong modularity derived from its 1953-55 design. The former Sleigh Corner building, at 158-164 Queen Street, demonstrates later developments in the Post-War Modernist style. With its use of applied concrete panels over an expressed structural system, the former Sleigh Corner is

a fine example of the Post-War Modernist style of the 1960s that moved away from the use of uniform glass curtain wall systems to more heavily modulated facades giving a three-dimensional quality to the buildings. (Criterion D)

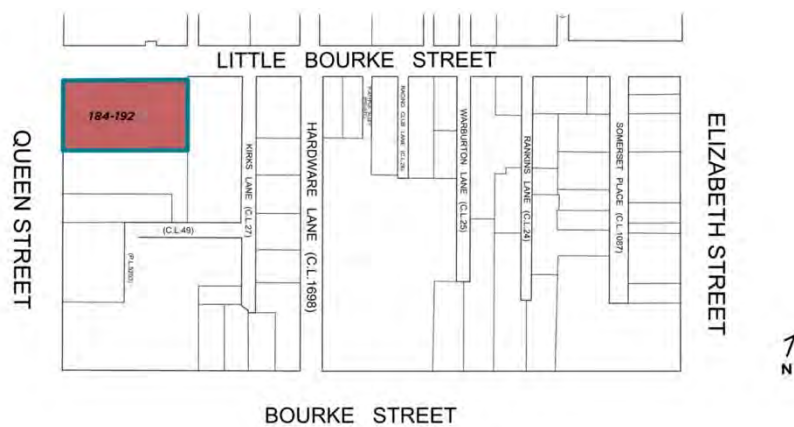
The former Sleigh Corner building is aesthetically significant as a refined and substantial example of later development in curtain wall design. Constructed in 1964 it utilises a mix of materials to create a greater modularity and three-dimensional quality to the facades. Its aesthetic significance lies in the retention of the original building form, including original entry foyer and shopfront setback to both street frontages, the plaza setback and original sculpture on the rear wall of the publicly accessible plaza. The plaza form was once a common type for buildings of this era, created in response to the site plot ratio regime between 1964 and 1999, but which is becoming increasingly rare within the Hoddle Grid. The aesthetic significance is further enhanced by retention of the original Tom Bass sculpture 'Transportation', attached to the rear wall of the plaza (lift shaft). (Criterion E)

### **Primary source**

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

<b>SITE NAME</b>	The Former Houston Building [also known as Aviation House]
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	184-192 Queen Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	108104



SURVEY DATE: October 2019		SURVEY BY: GJM Heritage	
<b>HERITAGE INVENTORY</b>	No	<b>EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY</b>	No
<b>PLACE TYPE</b>	Individual Heritage Place	<b>PROPOSED CATEGORY</b>	Significant
		<b>FORMER GRADE</b>	Ungraded
<b>DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:</b>	E & G Kolle & Associates	<b>BUILDER:</b>	Clementsons Pty Ltd
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	1964-1965





## 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 1.10 Brutalism and brickwork
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Buiness and finance

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Hotel
1920s	Hotel
1960s	Hotel, 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 Former Houston Building was designed by architects and engineers E & G Kolle & Associates as an office building for owners United Land Properties Pty Ltd. The building was constructed in 1964-1965 by builders Clementsons 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).

### **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 Houston Building was designed by architects and engineers E & G Kolle & Associates for owners United Land Properties Pty Ltd (BAP). The building was constructed in 1964-1965 by builders Clementsons Pty Ltd (*Cross-Section*, Aug 1965; S&Mc).

Architectural drawings of 'The Houston Building' dated March 1964 show the key elevations with the original ground floor design, and the ground floor plan with a plaza and landscaped area off Queen Street (Figure 1 – Figure 3). The City of Melbourne received a building permit application for the 'new office building' at 184-190 Queen Street in April 1964 (with an estimated total cost of £856,243) (BAI), after which construction was completed in 1965 (Figure 4 & Figure 5). Photos dated 1966 show the completed building plaza design (later infilled) (Figure 6).

The name of the building changed to 'Aviation House' as early as 1967 (*Age*, 13 May 1967:59). Into the 1970s the entire building was occupied by the Civil Aviation Department and External Territories Department, both Commonwealth Departments (S&Mc).

### **E & G Kolle & Associates, architects**

The firm E and G Kolle & Associates, architects and engineers, was formed c1963 by Erike Kolle and Grethe Kolle and appears to have operated until c1975 (*Age* 18 Apr 1963:7; 21 Sep 1974:74).

Contemporary newspapers indicate that the firm designed major office buildings, hotels and industrial developments (*Age*, 6 Jul 1968:71). In the 1960s their offices were addressed to 85 Queen Street, Melbourne (*Age*, 28 Sep 1963:64).

Erik Kolle was a Danish engineer practising in Melbourne in the postwar era (*Age*, 23 Jan 1951:3; 11 Feb 1956:58). He established Erik Kolle & Associates Pty Ltd, a chartered engineering consultants' firm, c1956 with offices located in William Street, Melbourne (*Age*, 11 Feb 1956:58). Kolle was reputedly 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 Jul 1951:2).

Danish born architect Grethe Kolle arrived in Melbourne in 1952, where she worked in an architect's office while studying for an examination to be registered as an architect in Australia. She had studied at a technical college in Copenhagen before taking her degree at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Denmark (*Age*, Sep 1958:49; *Sun-Herald*, 28 Nov 1954:60; *News*, 11 Nov 1954:20).

E and G Kolle & Associates designed the Unitarian Peace Memorial Church in Grey Street, East Melbourne, which opened in 1966 (*Cross-Section* 1966). Other notable commissions included The Houston Building, 184-92 Queen Street (1964-65), Marland House at 566-574 Bourke Street, Melbourne's largest office tower at the time of construction in 1971 (*Cross-Section*, 1971; *Age*, 2 Apr 1969:24) and Cowan House, the 16-storey building at 457-469 Little Collins Street, Melbourne (1969; which the firm occupied upon completion) (*Age*, 19 Apr 1969:75). Sydney commissions included the \$50 million development at the Royal Agricultural Society Showgrounds, Moore Park, Sydney, and the MLC Centre in Martin Place, Sydney (1975) (*Age*, 27 Apr 1971:13; 18 Aug 1973:5; NSW State Archives and Records; SRIA 1994:15).

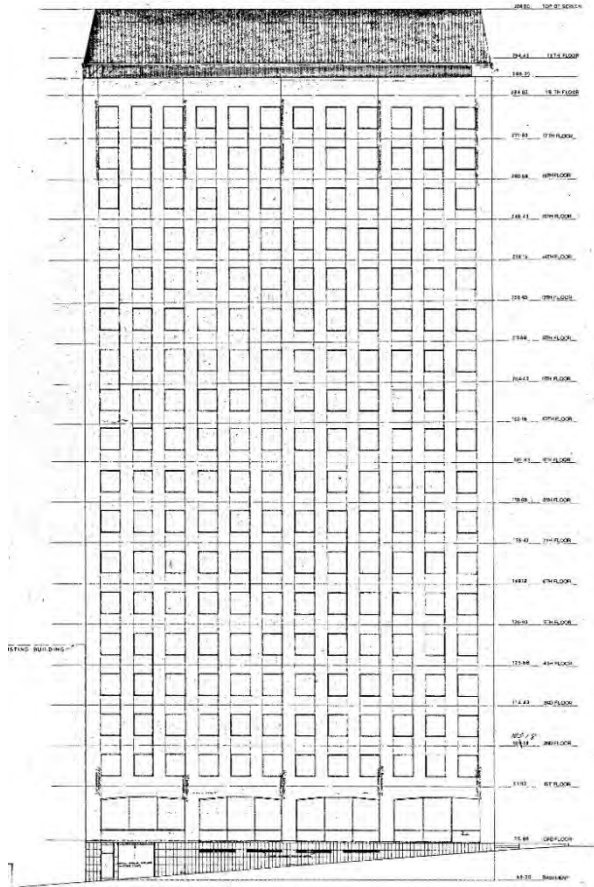


Figure 1. North elevation to Little Bourke Street. Drawing by E & G Kollé & Associates, dated March 1964 (BAP).

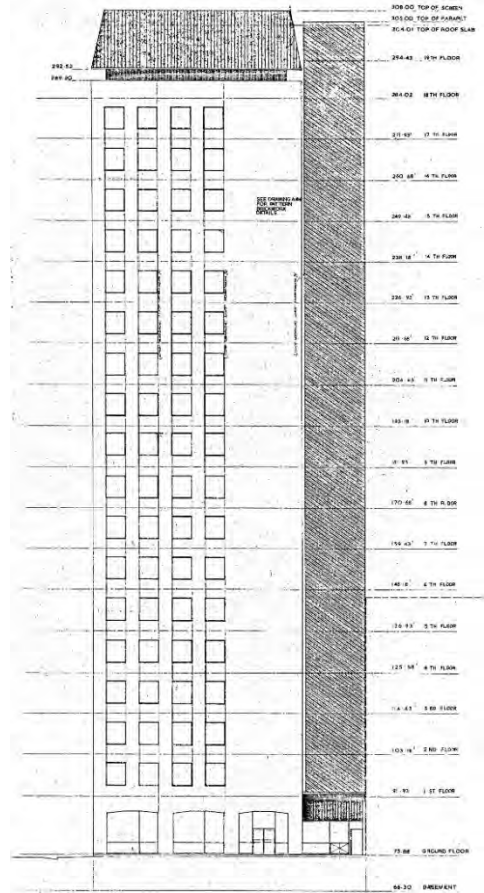


Figure 2. West elevation to Queen Street. Drawing by E & G Kollé & Associates, dated March 1964 (BAP).

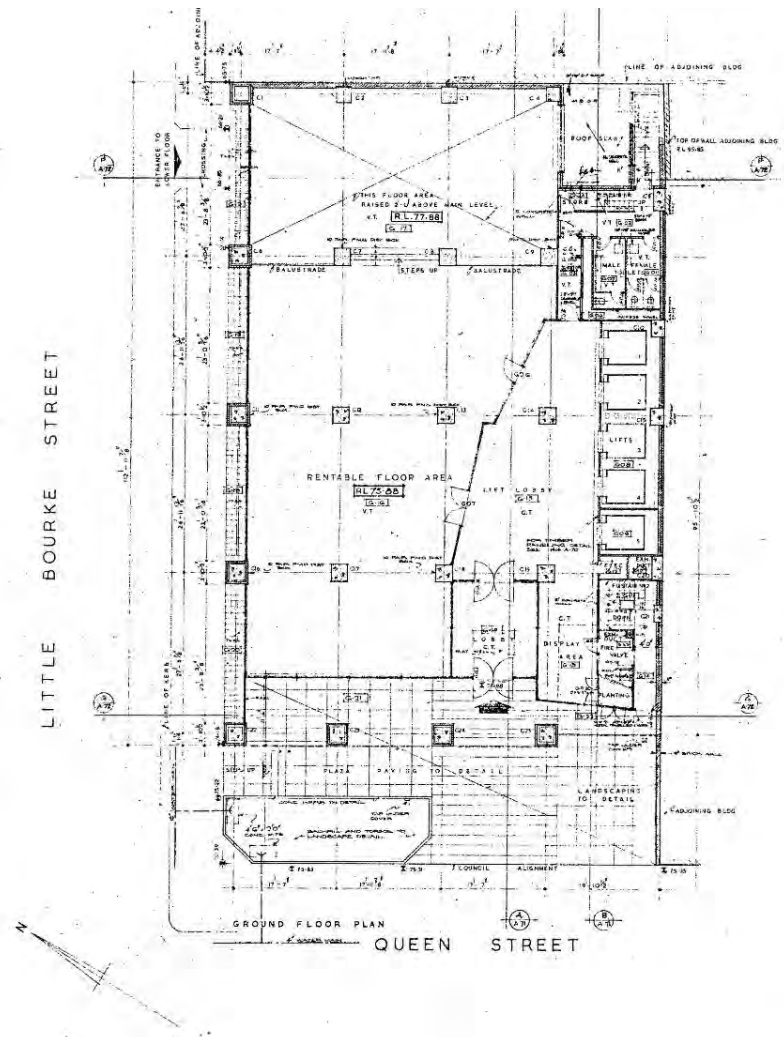


Figure 3. Ground floor plan showing the plaza and landscaped area off Queen Street. Drawing by E & G Kelle & Associates, dated March 1964 (BAP).



Figure 4. Image of the building under construction, published in the August 1965 edition of *Cross-Section* as part of an advertisement for Dunlop flooring.

Figure 5. Houston Building nearing completion in 1965 (NLA, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, object 160396088).



Figure 6. The completed building in 1966 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/146).

## SITE DESCRIPTION

The Former Houston Building at 184-192 Queen Street is a 17-storey commercial building located on a sloping site at the south-east corner of Queen and Little Bourke streets. Constructed in 1964-1965 to a design by E & G Kolle & Associates, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

Clearly visible above adjacent buildings, the Former Houston Building comprises two rectangular forms – the main building with broad frontage to Little Bourke Street and a parallel service core to the south. Together these present two narrow facades to Queen Street, with the service core façade set back from the main building line.

Sitting on a podium base, the building is of reinforced concrete column and slab construction with curtain walls of cream brick. The main building form presents two grid-like facades to Little Bourke and Queen streets. In contrast, windowless walls surround the service core and extend to a portion of wall at the south end of the Queen Street façade. The glazed facades contain rows of individual single pane windows, divided by brick piers, and alternating rows of plain brick spandrels. This results in a regular, near-square, grid. Detailing is restricted to square pigeonhole brickwork at the corners of the building and similar detailing at the junctions between piers and recessed spandrels. This main building form has a flat-topped hipped roof which conceals a caretaker's flat and roof-top plant.



The adjacent service core building form is narrower than the [façade](#) main building and is recessed at both the east and west ends, enabling the insertion of short horizontal strips of windows at both ends of the south façade of the main building form. Highly decorative diagonal brickwork patterning covers the entirety of the recessed end facades, and a matching vertical strip of brickwork decorates the centre of the east façade of the main building form.

The building sits on a stone-faced base which is visible below the reclad street level façade to Little Bourke Street. Recent cladding obscures the original four large glazed windows with dividing piers. An entrance to a basement car park is situated at the lower east end of this north façade. The original recessed street façade in Queen Street has been demolished and infilled with a single storey retail space, which extends across the deep recess of the service core to the south.

## INTEGRITY

The Former Houston Building, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building above street level, remains highly intact to its original construction of 1964-1965. Works to the building at street level have altered the original design.

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 office building.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The Former Houston Building at 184-192 Queen 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. Located on a corner site and set back from Queen Street, the building's solid grid-like curtain wall facades of regularly spaced, frameless glazed openings set in plain cream brick facades, the clear expression of the service core and extensive use of decorative brickwork patterning, can be clearly observed from both Queen and Little Bourke streets. Despite the redesign of the street-level facades, the upper facades of the Former Houston Building 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 Houston 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*

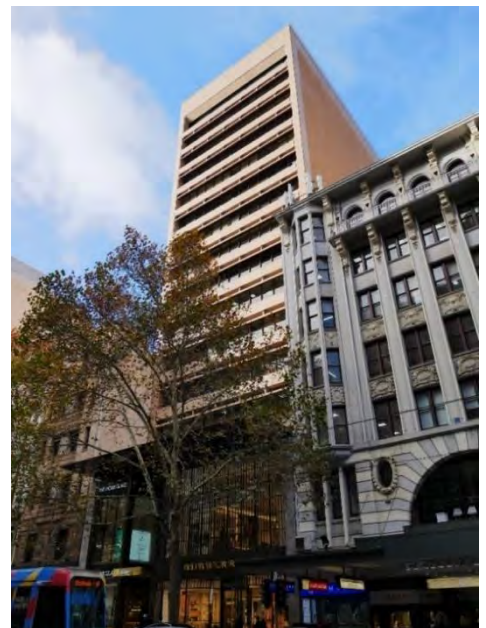
Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



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)



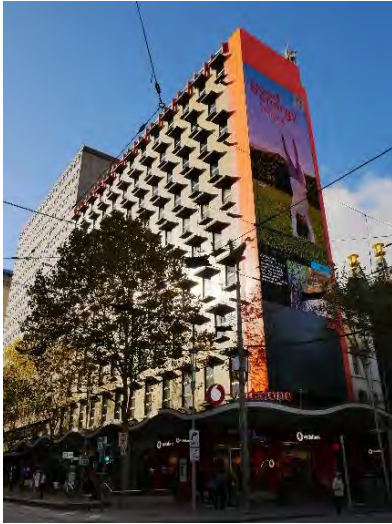
Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building, 155-161 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961-62)



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)



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



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)



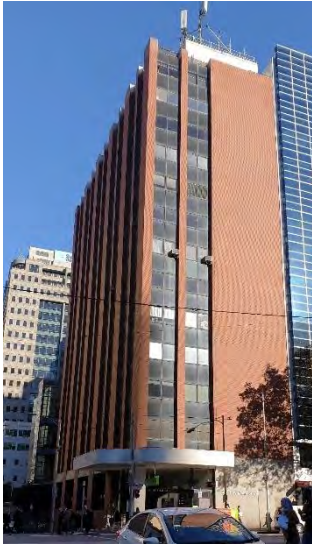
Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William Street  
(Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



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 Houston Building at 184-192 Queen 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 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 Houston Building clearly demonstrates this class of place.

**ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA**

✓	<p><b>CRITERION A</b> Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).</p>
	<p><b>CRITERION B</b> Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).</p>
	<p><b>CRITERION C</b> Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).</p>
✓	<p><b>CRITERION D</b> Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).</p>
	<p><b>CRITERION E</b> Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).</p>
	<p><b>CRITERION F</b> Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)</p>
	<p><b>CRITERION G</b> 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><b>CRITERION H</b> 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

**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.

*Cross-Section*: No. 154, August 1965; No. 175, May 1967; No. 216, Dec 1970 - Jan 1971.

National Library of Australia (NLA), images and photographers as cited.

New South Wales (NSW) State Archives and Records, 'H2001 Sydney, MLC Centre, Martin Place, Applicant CTA [Commercial Travelers Association], Architect-Engineer E G Kolle & Associates, Working Drawings, 1975'. Cited by Context Pty Ltd.

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Steel Reinforcement Institute of Australia (SRIA) 1994, *Australia's 100 Tallest Buildings*, Digest no D3, September 1994.

*Sun-Herald*.

*Sydney Morning Herald. The Age*.

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**PREVIOUS STUDIES**

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**Central Activities District  
Conservation Study 1985** Ungraded

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 1993** Ungraded

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

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011** Ungraded

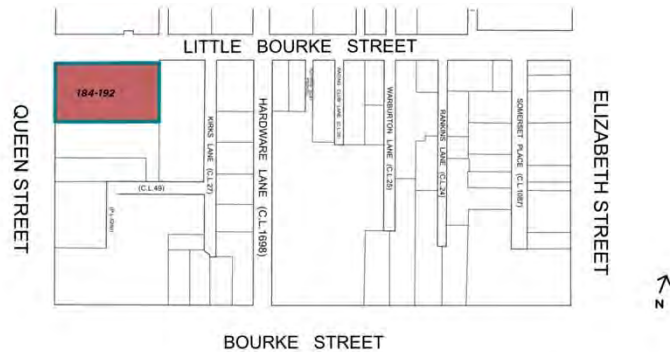
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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** The Former  
Houston Building



**PS ref no:** [HOXXXXHO1370](#)



### What is significant?

The Former Houston Building, 184-192 Queen Street, a multi-storey office building constructed in 1964-1965.

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 frontages are not significant.

### How it is significant?

The Former Houston Building at 184-192 Queen Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

Constructed in 1964-1965 to a design by E & G Kolle & Associates, the Former Houston 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 prestige afforded by a dominant city presence (Criterion A).

The Former Houston Building at 184-192 Queen 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 17-



storey building, the Former Houston Building clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a 1960s to mid-1970s structure, including solid grid-like curtain wall facades of regularly spaced, frameless glazed openings set in plain cream brick facades, clear expression of the service core and the innovative and extensive use of decorative brickwork patterning. These demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style (Criterion D).

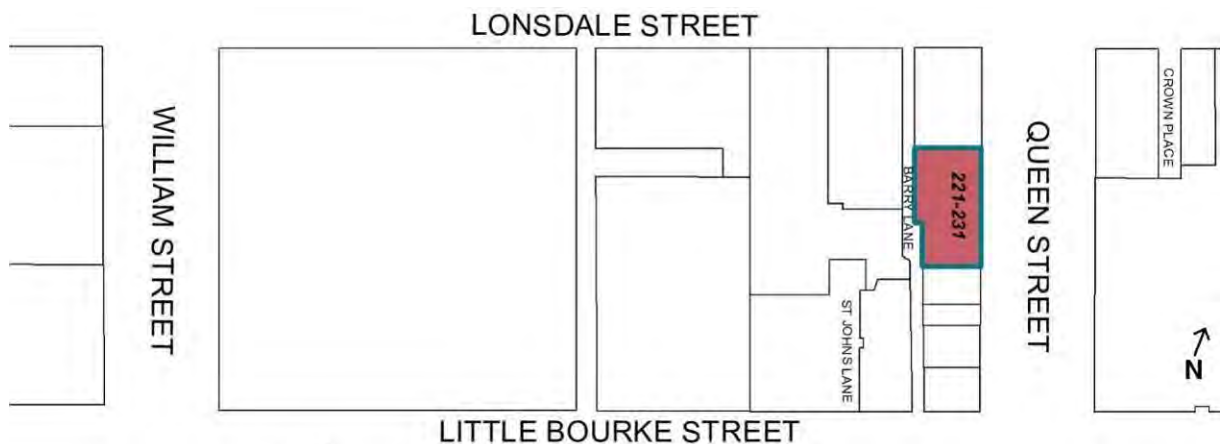
**Primary source**

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



<b>SITE NAME</b>	Former Law Department's Building
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	221-231 Queen Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	108079



**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:** Fischer Group Architects

**BUILDER:** A J Galvin Pty Ltd

**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, 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	Retail, Residential, Warehouses
1920s	Retail, Residential, Warehouses
1960s	Retail, Residential, Warehouses

## 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 Law Department's Building, at 221-231 Queen Street, is an 11-storey postwar office building completed in 1972 to a design by Fischer Group architects, built by A J Galvin Pty Ltd. The building opened in 1972 for Sydney based firm, ADC Properties (Victoria) Pty Ltd and was owned by that company until 1989. Known as the Law Department's Building, it housed a number of State government law agencies until c1987. It continues to be used mainly for 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 site at 221-231 Queen Street is part of Crown Allotments 10 and 11, Block 19, purchased by Charles Scott and Charles Howard respectively in 1837 ('Town of Melbourne' 1838). From the 1880s the subject land comprised three allotments, with two shop-residences at 221 and 223 Queen Street, and a large warehouse at 225-231 Queen Street. The latter was occupied by Sidney Cooke printers, furnishers and ink manufacturers until at least 1970 (see Figure 1) (Mahlstedt Map, no 19, 1888; MMBW Detail Plan no 1016, 1895; S&Mc 1955-1970).



Figure 1. A detail from a 1966 photograph of the western side of Queen Street showing the Victorian shop-residences and Sidney Cooke warehouse that previously occupied the subject site at 221-231 Queen Street. (Source: Halla 1966, SLV)

In 1969, Vic State Developments Pty Ltd lodged a preliminary permit application with Melbourne City Council to construct an 11-storey building at 225 Queen Street, with the superintending architects listed as Design & Construction Consultants Pty Ltd (a subsidiary of the Fischer Group of companies, also referred to as Group Architects); both the submitting and superintending architect firms were listed at the same address in Sydney, possibly indicating they were they run by the same company (BP 40357).

In 1970 ADC Properties (Victoria) Pty Ltd, likely the result of a change in business name, became the proprietor of the three allotments addressed as 221-231 Queen Street; this company featured in all later correspondence to Melbourne City Council (CT:V8858 F901).

Developers ADC (Australian Development Corporation) Properties Pty Ltd was founded in Sydney in 1960. The company acquired key sites across Sydney and Melbourne, including the subject site at 221-231 Queen Street, on which they built large-scale investment developments, often for the sole purposes of leasing. The firm partnered with the Fischer Group of companies on many of the development projects, extending their joint interests to Melbourne in 1969 with the construction of office buildings at 221-231 Queen Street and the corner of St Kilda Road and Armadale Street (*Sydney Morning Herald* 9 October 1969:12). The company's headquarter was in ADC House, 189 Kent Street, Sydney. The company continues to operate today with a focus on subdividing real property into lots (Bloomberg 2019).

In February 1970, ADC Properties (Victoria) Pty Ltd formally applied to develop the land at 221-231 Queen Street, with the construction of an 11-storey office building with basement carpark to replace the existing shop, office and warehouse buildings on site (BP 1880). While the original building plans are not available, from available correspondence and other plans it is clear that Group Architects were responsible for the design of the subject building with Taylor Thomson Whitting Pty Ltd operating as consulting engineers.

In March, a tender notice for the excavation of a site on Queen Street, measuring 103 feet by 56 feet, was advertised by Group Architects, which is likely related to the clearing of part of the subject site (*Age* 18 March 1970:25; BP 1880; CT V8858 F901). In July of the same year, 'demolition hands' were invited to apply for work at 225 Queen Street (*Age* 31 July 1970:20).



In June 1972, architects A V Pupedis & Associates submitted detail drawings for the brass-coloured infill panels planned for the building's pre-cast concrete façade (BP 41245).

By July 1972 the subject office building at 221-223 Queen Street was completed (see Figure 2) (*Age* 1 July 1972).

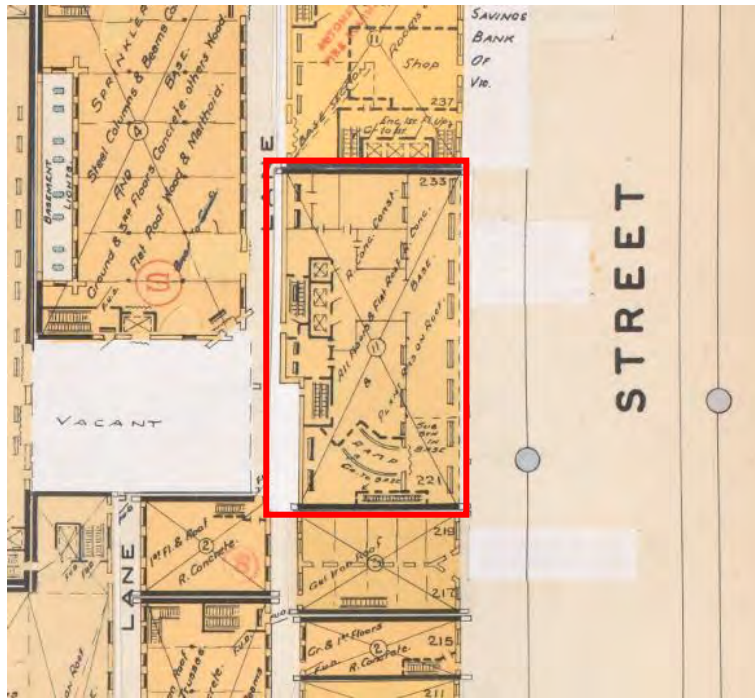


Figure 2. Detail from Mahlstedt fire survey plan dated 1948, and presumably amended in the 1970s, shows the subject building as an 11-storey building with basement of reinforced concrete construction. (Mahlstedt Map Section 1, no 16, 1948).

In November 1972 a newspaper article reported that the building's pre-cast concrete façade had been made using moulds from an earlier building in York Street, Sydney, also designed and constructed by the Fischer Group for ADC Ltd. The fact that moulds had been reused to cast the panels for another building, albeit with slight dimensional modifications, was unheard of at the time. A leading firm in the Australian stone and concrete industry, Melocco Bros Pty Ltd, carried out the adjustments to the panels (see Figure 3) (*Age* 6 November 1972:23). 95-99 York Street, Sydney, had an almost identical façade design (lower levels now altered) as seen in Figure 4 (*Sydney Morning Herald* 21 July 1969:54; *Age* 6 November 1972:23). The Melbourne model, however, was given a different finish: sand-blasted in quartz aggregate and white cement, while marble aggregate was used in Sydney. Also, slight dimensional changes were made to the panels by Melocco Bros, to suit the local site (*Age* 6 November 1972:23). Built in 1969 by the Fischer Group in collaboration with Melocco Bros, another ADC building at 87 Elizabeth Street, Sydney (Figure 5) had a very similar arched ground-level colonnade (since altered) (*Sydney Morning Herald* 9 October 1969:12).



Figure 3. Photography of the subject building from 1972 reveals that few changes have been made to its exterior. (Source: Halla c1972, SLV (left); Age 6 November 1972:23 (right))



Figure 4. Rendering of 95-99 York Street, Sydney, built in 1970 using same precast concrete moulds. The secondary elevation to 168-172 Clarence Street also features same panels. The lower section of York Street façade has been since altered. (Source: *Sydney Morning Herald* 21 July 1969:54)



Figure 5. 87 Elizabeth Street, Sydney (corner Elizabeth and King streets), built in 1969 and now substantially altered. (Source: *Sydney Morning Herald* 9 October 1969:12)

Throughout the 1970s the property changed hands often between numerous investment holding companies (CT:V8901 F556). From 1974, 221 Queen Street housed the State government Law Department's offices, including the executive government law agencies of the State Law Office, Attorney General, Crown Solicitor and Parliamentary Counsel (S&Mc 1974). In 1974, the Law

Department's Building, as it was known, was addressed as 221-223 Queen Street, and by 1980s as 221 Queen Street (*Age* 14 June 1986:179).

In 1985, 221-231 Queen Street was purchased by investment company Hextrom Pty Ltd, possibly a subsidiary of the Burns Philp Trustee Company based in Sydney, which was the firm listed on the certificate of title (*Age* 13 November 1985: 33; CT:V9666 F001). Originally a major Australian shipping line, by the 1980s Burns Philp was a multinational company in control of over 200 firms spanning 100 industries (SLQ 2009).

In late 1985, the subject building housed a number of offices of the Victorian Public Service (*Age* 7 December 1985:169). The building was refurbished in 1987, in which year 'superb office suites' were advertised for lease. This may indicate the year that the State government relinquished its offices in the building (*Age* 3 December 1987:27).

In 1989 the building was sold for \$16.25 million and was promptly strata subdivided into multiple office units across the eleven floors (*Age* 12 April 1989:27; CT:V9889 F972). Numerous investors purchased office space in the building, with various professional services firms taking up residency, including the ANZ Bank (*Age* 18 April 1990:23).

Changes to the building since its construction have been largely confined to the interior spaces, including the construction of internal partitions to a number of floors from 1980 to 1992 (BP). Building permit cards also detail 'repairs to the external façade' in 1982, though it is not known which repairs these relate to as the upper floors of the building appear to be externally intact from the time of construction. Permit documentation also records refurbishments pertaining to the ground floor shops in 1986-1992. These changes at street level have retained the original structure of the colonnade, with retail and office foyer shopfronts fitted with contemporary units (see Figure 6).

Today, the basement level of the subject building is occupied by a restaurant bar, and the ground level houses café businesses. The offices of numerous law and financial firms and professional services consultancies, including real estate agency Marvelli Town & Associates, who have tenanted offices in the building since at least 1989 and who purchased an office unit on the first floor in 1994, occupy levels 1, 2, 4-8 and 10 (*Age* 18 November 1989:256; CT:V9889 F977). Levels 3 and 9 are occupied by the Reformed Theological College and Australian Pacific College, respectively.



Figure 6. Image from a 1989 auction notice for one of the ground-level shops shows the original structure of the colonnade. (Source: *Age* 7 November 1989:33)

*Fischer Group, architect*

The Fischer Group of companies was a consortium of companies providing design, construction and management services. In the 1960s, Sydney Fischer formed a number of subsidiary firms including Design & Construction Consultants Pty Ltd, Fischer Constructions Pty Ltd, Hydraulic Installations Pty Ltd, Shop & Office Fitters Pty Ltd, Glass Products Pty Ltd, and Airstream Pty Ltd. As a package, the company offered the construction and fit out of numerous large-scale development projects, a large number of which occurred in Sydney.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, the Group carried out a number of projects for ADC Properties Pty Ltd, including the ADC Houses at 189 Kent Street, Sydney (1964), which both ADC Properties and Fischer Group used as their headquarters; 95-99 York Street, Sydney (1970); 87 Elizabeth Street, Sydney (1969); in 77 Pacific Highway, North Sydney (1969); and the subject building at 221-231 Queen Street, Melbourne (1972) (*Sydney Morning Herald* 9 October 1969:12; *Sydney Morning Herald* 21 July 1969:54).

*Melocco Bros Pty Ltd, contributing designers*

Based in Annandale, NSW, Melocco Bros was also associated with the other Fischer Group and ADC Properties Pty Ltd's projects including the subject building at 221-231 Queen Street.

The Italian Melocco brothers, Peter, Antonio and Galliano, were the first tradesmen to practice mosaic craft in New South Wales and introduced terrazzo to Australia. It has been estimated that about 90 per cent of the marble, scagliola and terrazzo work in Sydney between 1910 and 1965 was undertaken by the Meloccos and their studio. Galliano, who joined the family business in the 1920s after completing his education in engineering, was responsible for building up the construction and concrete aspects of the business. He introduced ready-mixed concrete to Australia in 1941 (Kevin 2005).

*Taylor Thomson Whitting, consulting engineers*

The engineering firm Taylor Thomson Whitting was established in Sydney in 1959 when noted structural engineer Dick Taylor (1921-2018) was joined by Jock Thomson and Alan Whitting. Operating today as TTW, the firm remains one of Australia's leading engineering consultancies. Notable commissions include the State Office Block, Sydney (1961, now demolished), the Walk Through Aviary at Taronga Zoo (1972), and more recently, The Mint, Sydney, and Bunjil Place in Narre Warren, Melbourne (Taylor Thomson Whitting 2019).

**SITE DESCRIPTION**

The former Law Department's Building at 221-231 Queen Street is an 11-storey commercial building in the late Post-War Modernist style. It was constructed in 1972, and designed and constructed by subsidiaries of the Fischer Group. The building is located on the western side of Queen Street between Lonsdale Street and Little Bourke Street, and also has a rear frontage to Barry Lane.

The building demonstrates the characteristics of the style, particularly through its use of free form or organic nonloadbearing precast concrete panels-afaçades its principal facade instead of the flat, aluminium framed glass curtain-wall systems that characterised the initial phase of the style, or its later derivative that used precast concrete elements but with a rectangular-afaçade phasis.

The principal facade to Queen Street comprises a nonloadbearing precast concrete panel curtain wall that is divided vertically into eight bays, separated by projecting vertical ribs that terminate in modest finials above the roof parapet. Cast into each panel are three vertically proportioned window openings with curved corners, with what appears to be frameless glazing. Also within each module, below the window at floor level, is a recessed square panel with rounded corners and a brass (possibly anodised aluminium) finish. There is a lesser vertical rib between each window module, which similarly terminates as a finial above the parapet. Other than the repetitive modest finials, the building has no formal termination or parapet at the roof level, as is typical of the style.

At street level, the main structural grid of the building is expressed as a colonnade that divides the frontage into four equal shopfront modules. The actual shopfronts are recessed and the curved vocabulary of the window modules to the upper levels is expressed within the street level openings with curved corners where the columns meet the linear line of the first floor precast concrete panels, emphasised by unusual corbelling cast into the soffits. Contemporary shop fronts sit within these four equal bays. Early photographs indicate that the original shop fronts may have been further recessed creating a colonnade. A bronze relief Victorian Coat of Arms is extant near the central entrance and is indicative of the building's original use as the Law Department's building. A second bronze relief, possibly depicting St George and the Dragon, is positioned internally above one of the lifts in the main lobby. The signage 'ADC Queen' seen in the 1972 photography (Figure 5) has been removed.

The southern end wall is exposed above the neighbouring building, revealing the basic precast concrete post and beam construction infilled with nonloadbearing brickwork.

The rear elevation facing Barry Lane is of nonloadbearing brickwork laid in stretcher bond with steel bands attached to the façade at the floor levels. The original pattern of fenestrations is extant with steel framed windows and louvres, with sloping brick sills.

## **INTEGRITY**

The former Law Department's Building at 221-231 Queen Street is highly intact with very few changes visible to original or early fabric. Above the street level, the building retains its original modular pattern of fenestration, and the materiality of the precast panels with projecting vertical ribs and finials, window openings and brass-finished recessed square panels with rounded corners. The rear and side (south end) facades of nonloadbearing face brickwork with original pattern of fenestrations are also intact.

At the street level the original structure of the colonnade that divides the frontage into four equal shopfront modules remains, including corbelling and curved corners where the columns meet the linear line of the first-floor precast concrete panels. The original retail and office foyer shopfronts have been fitted with contemporary shopfronts, and the setback to the alignment of the shopfronts may have been reduced. Other than these changes the building is unusually intact at street level by comparison with other examples. Overall the building is of 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 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.

The following examples are comparable with the former Law Department's Building at 221-231 Queen Street, being of a similar use, scale, style and/or construction date.

### 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*



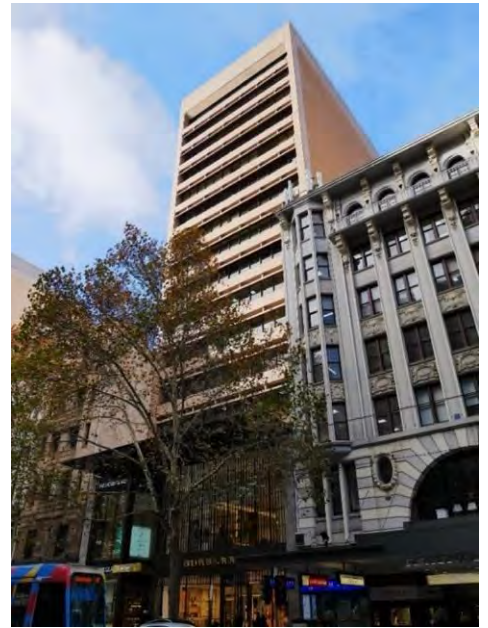
Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



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)

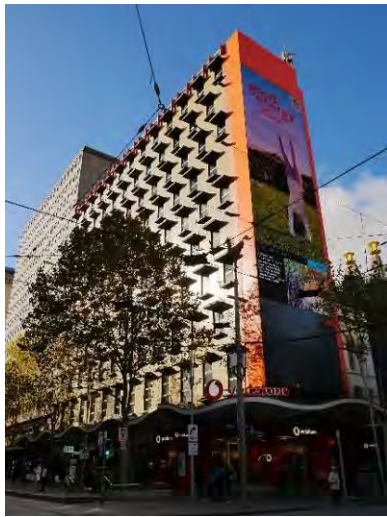




Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



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 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)



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



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 Law Department's Building at 221-231 Queen Street is comparable to a number of central Melbourne buildings included – or recommended for inclusion – in the HO. In particular, the subject building 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 not many comparative examples in central Melbourne with sufficient integrity to demonstrate these characteristics in their original condition. Comparable examples are the Royal Insurance Group building at 430-442 Collins Street (interim HO1010) and Equitable House at 335-349 Little Collins Street (recommended as individually significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review). These buildings all demonstrate the use of repetitive non-loadbearing precast concrete modules to achieve a three-dimensional depth to their facades, although in a much more rectilinear and much less curvaceous aesthetic. A more direct comparison would be with the former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch building at 85-91 Queen Street (Recommended as individually significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review), although unlike the largely intact street level of 221-231 Queen Street, the lower levels at 85-91 Queen Street have been altered. The subject building is unusually intact at street level by comparison with other examples.

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**ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA**


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- |   |  |
|---|--|
| ✓ | <p><b>CRITERION A</b><br/>Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).</p>  |
|   | <p><b>CRITERION B</b><br/>Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).</p>   |
|   | <p><b>CRITERION C</b><br/>Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).</p>   |
| ✓ | <p><b>CRITERION D</b><br/>Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).</p>   |
| ✓ | <p><b>CRITERION E</b><br/>Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).</p>  |
|   | <p><b>CRITERION F</b><br/>Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)</p>   |
|   | <p><b>CRITERION G</b><br/>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><b>CRITERION H</b><br/>Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).</p>  |
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**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**

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**Central Activities District  
Conservation Study 1985** Ungraded

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 1993** C

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

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011** Ungraded

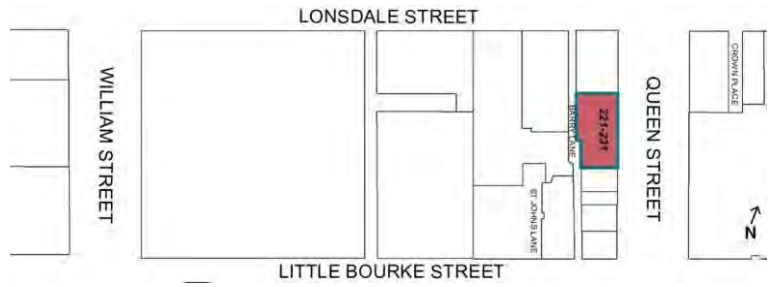
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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

**Heritage Place:** Former Law Department's Building



**PS ref no:** HO1372XXXX





### What is significant?

The former Law Department's Building at 221-231 Queen Street, Melbourne, designed and built by the Fischer Group of companies in 1972, ~~is significant.~~

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

- ~~The building's original building-external~~ form and scale;
- ~~Original~~ non-loadbearing precast concrete curtain wall to its principal (Queen Street) façade;
- ~~Original~~ frameless glazing to upper level windows;
- ~~Original~~ street level colonnade, with corbelling and curved corners that divides the frontage into four equal shopfront modules, and set backs to shopfronts and entry lobby; ~~and~~
- ~~Original~~ non-loadbearing face brick wall with fenestration pattern and windows to its rear (Barry Lane) façade.

Later alterations are not significant.

### How it is significant?

The former Law Department's Building at 221-231 Queen Street is of historical, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

The former Law Department's Building, opened in 1972, is historically significant as evidence of the broadening of state government powers after World War Two, a shift that resulted in increased occupation of buildings by State government offices in the Melbourne city centre. The State government's law offices were housed in the building from 1972 until c1987. The former Law Department's Building is historically significant as a large-scale building that demonstrates the growth in government demand after the war. (Criterion A)

Located in the financial and legal precinct in the western part of the city, the former Law Department's Building provides evidence of the significant investment made in city building by interstate interests as a form of fund investment after World War Two, in this case by Sydney firm, ACD Properties Pty Ltd.

(Criterion A)

The former Law Department's Building is significant as a highly intact example of postwar commercial development in central Melbourne utilising the Post-War Modernist style that characterised the wave of development in curtain wall design during the 1960s and 1970s. 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 exhibits key characteristics of later examples of the style, with a precast concrete curtain wall used to achieve variety of expression and flexibility of form. (Criterion D)

The former Law Department's Building is aesthetically significant for its unusual curtain wall detailing, with curved windows and elaborate brass spandrel panels (designed by architects A V Pupedis & Associates) to achieve a much more organic aesthetic. It is also notable for its unusual and highly intact street level colonnade, with corbelling and curved corners and set back shopfronts and entry lobby.

(Criterion E)

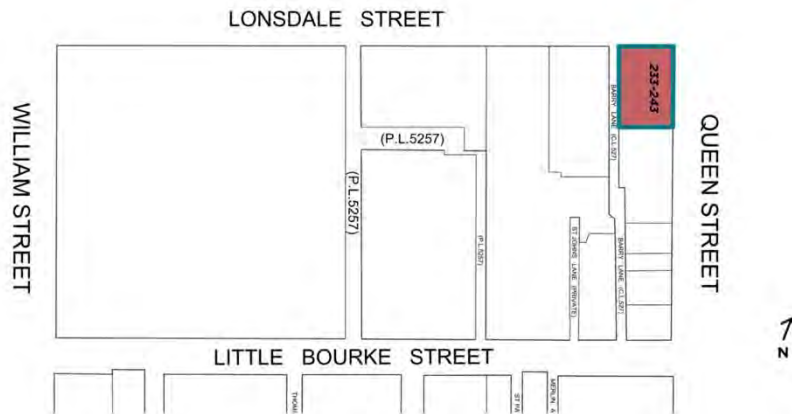
#### **Primary source**

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



<b>SITE NAME</b>	Former State Savings Bank of Victoria [also known as Melbourne Chambers (current name)]
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	233-243 Queen Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	108080



SURVEY DATE: October 2019

SURVEY BY: GJM Heritage

<b>HERITAGE INVENTORY</b>	No	<b>EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY</b>	No
<b>PLACE TYPE</b>	Individual Heritage Place	<b>PROPOSED CATEGORY</b>	Significant
<b>DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:</b>	Godfrey & Spowers Hughes, Mewton and Lobb	<b>FORMER GRADE</b>	Ungraded
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	<b>BUILDER:</b>	Not known
		<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	1967-1968

## 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
	1.10 Brutalism and brickwork
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Buiness and finance

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Office, Stables, Retail, Hairdresser
1920s	Retail, Workshop, Office, Garage, Education, Workshop/Manufacturers
1960s	Retail, Health/Fitness, 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 multi-storey office building on the south-west corner of Queen and Lonsdale streets was designed by architects and engineers, Godfrey & Spowers Hughes, Mewton and Lobb to house the titles office branch of the State Savings Bank of Victoria. The building was constructed in 1967-1968.



## 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 Kollé & 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 multi-storey office building on the south-west corner of Queen and Lonsdale streets was designed by architects and engineers, Godfrey & Spowers Hughes, Mewton and Lobb for the State Savings Bank of Victoria (BAP), and constructed in 1967-1968.

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).

The State Savings Bank of Victoria had occupied an earlier building at 241-243 Queen Street from 1958 (*Progress*, Feb 1968:2; S&Mc), before constructing the present building. Architectural drawings dated January 1967 show the key elevation and floor plans of the new building. The plans showed the banking chamber entrance off Lonsdale Street (which had a two-storey ceiling height), and entrances to a lettable space and the lift lobby off Queen Street (Figure 1 - Figure 3). The City of Melbourne received a building permit application for the multi-storey office building in September 1967 (with an estimated total cost of £1,074,097) (BAI).

The February 1968 edition of the State Savings Bank of Victoria staff magazine *Progress* published an illustration of the building on its cover (Figure 4) and reported that the 11-storey building, that would house the bank's titles office branch (which had occupied the earlier building on the site), would be completed by the end of 1968. The article continued

*... the fully air conditioned building, designed by Godfrey and Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, under the direction of our Chief Architect, Mr R Cousland, is based on the use of steel sections from the new BHP mills at Whyalla, South Australia. The frame using this metal is lighter and more economical than has previously been possible with Australian steel.*

The bank was to occupy part of the ground and first floors, with the remainder of the building available to let. This was the second multi-storey building the bank erected in the post-war period (*Progress*, Feb 1968:2).

In 1970 the second to seventh floors were occupied by the Town and Country Planning Board and seventh to tenth floors by the Valuer-General's Office (S&Mc, 1970). In 2019 the building is called Melbourne Chambers (CoMMaps).

### Godfrey & Spowers Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, architects

Godfrey and Spowers was established in c 1901 by architects, William Scott Purves Godfrey and Henry Howard Spowers. The firm designed a large number of houses, warehouses and institutional buildings and was best known for its designs for bank buildings.

Godfrey's son, William Purves Race Godfrey, joined the practice in 1931 as a student. Spowers died the following year and Race Godfrey was made partner in c 1934. The firm was suspended in 1941 as a direct result of World War II, during which time Race Godfrey worked with the RAAF as a civilian architect in Melbourne and Sydney and his father, William Godfrey carried out commissions for air-raid shelters. Race Godfrey recommenced practice late in 1944. His father did not continue with the new firm, and retired from practice in the same year.

By the early 1950s, Race Godfrey expanded the firm to include new partners, Eric Hughes, Geoffrey Mewton and John Lobb, becoming Godfrey Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb. The expanded firm specialised in large office and institutional buildings. Notable commissions within central Melbourne included the Allans Building at 278 Collins Street (1959), the Bank of Adelaide Building, 265-69 Collins Street (1959-60), the AMP Building, 344-50 Collins Street (1966-68) and the State Savings Bank of Victoria, 233-43 Queen Street (1967-68). The National Mutual Building, Collins Street, Melbourne (1962-5, demolished 2015) was a key work for the firm during this period.

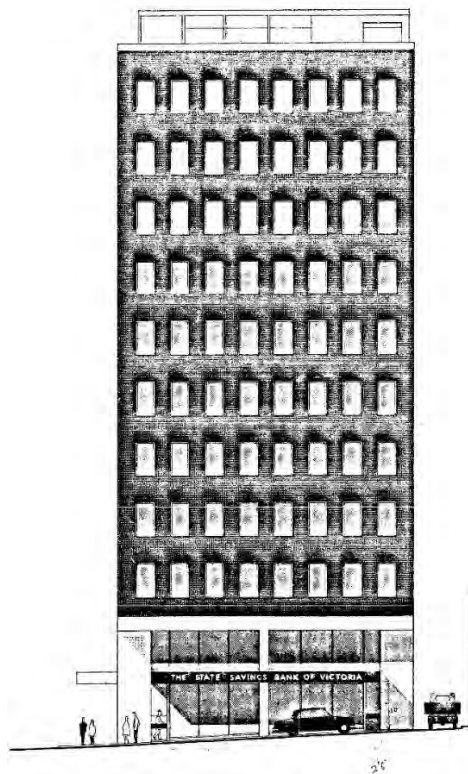


Figure 1. North elevation to Lonsdale Street. Drawing by Godfrey & Spowers Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, dated January 1967 (BAP).

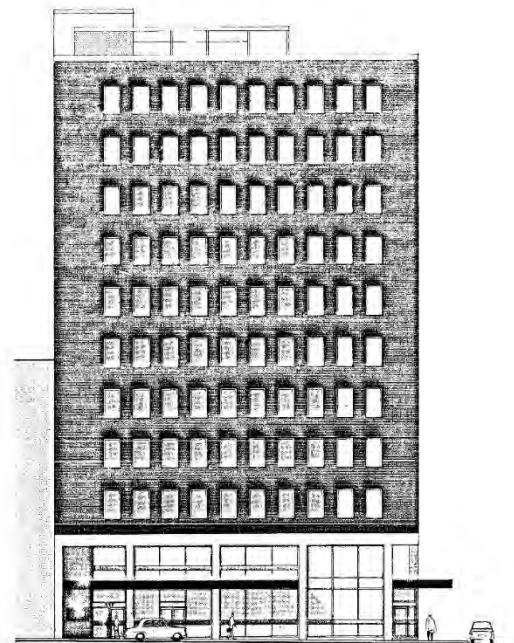


Figure 2. East elevation to Queen Street. Drawing by Godfrey & Spowers Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, dated January 1967 (BAP).

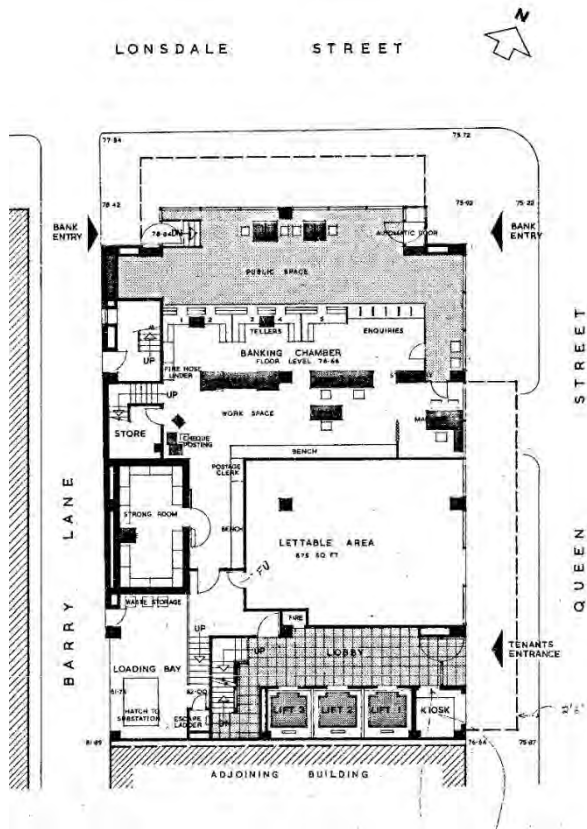


Figure 3. Ground floor plan showing the banking chamber adjacent to Lonsdale Street. Drawing by Godfrey & Spowers Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, dated January 1967 (BAP).



Figure 4. Illustration of the building published on the front cover of the February 1968 edition of *Progress* magazine, the staff publication for the State Savings Bank.



Figure 5. The building in 1984 (City of Melbourne Libraries online Heritage Collection, Reference no. Butler14364).

## SITE DESCRIPTION

The Former State Savings Bank of Victoria building at 233-243 Queen Street is a 10-storey commercial building located at the south-west corner of Queen and Lonsdale streets. The building has main frontages to Queen and Lonsdale streets and a secondary façade to Barry Lane which forms the western boundary of the site. Constructed in 1967-1968 to a design by Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

Sitting on a dominant double-height podium, the rectangular building is of concrete encased steel column and beam construction with curtain walls of manganese brickwork. The upper walls of the main east and north facades have regularly spaced, individual windows placed across the entire wall surfaces. These windows are set in fine stainless-steel-clad timber frames which project beyond the brick surface; otherwise the walls are undecorated and terminate at a crowning row of brickwork with fine rendered parapet. The secondary west façade, also of face brickwork, has a vertical strip of similarly framed windows at the north end, otherwise the wall contains rows of multi-paned, metal-framed windows.

The double-height podium extends around the two main corner facades and provides the building with a strong, contrasting base. Although re-clad, the form and much of the detailing of this podium has been retained. This includes a deep fascia and projecting canopies, which provide the composition with strong horizontal lines; the form of the Lonsdale Street entrance, with projecting bay and doorways perpendicular to the façade, and the window sets with dividing mullions and piers. Original mosaic tiles which framed windows at street level (indicated on original architect's drawings), have been replaced.

## INTEGRITY

The Former State Savings Bank of Victoria building, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building above street level, remains highly intact from its original construction in 1967-1968. This includes the form of the podium base. Works to the building at street level have altered the original design.

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 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 Former State Savings Bank of Victoria building at 233-243 Queen 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. Located on a corner site, the building's solid grid-like curtain wall facades of regularly spaced, frameless glazed openings set in plain dark brick facades and highly prominent, contrasting podium base, can be clearly observed from both Queen Street and Lonsdale Street. Despite re-cladding of the street-level facades, the form of the podium and the upper facades of the Former State Savings Bank of Victoria building 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 State Savings Bank of Victoria. 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*





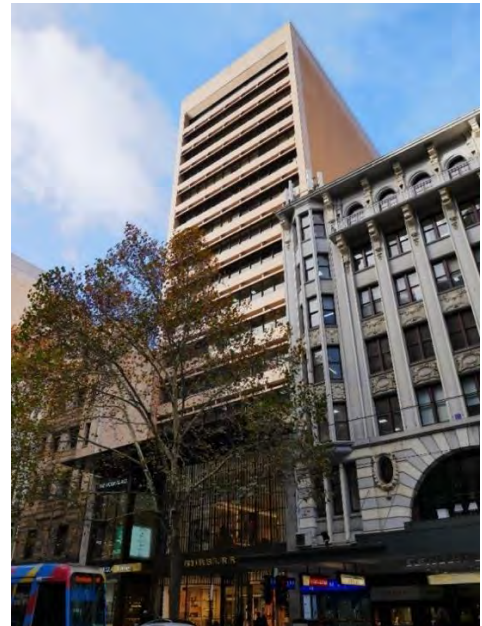
Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



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)



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



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)



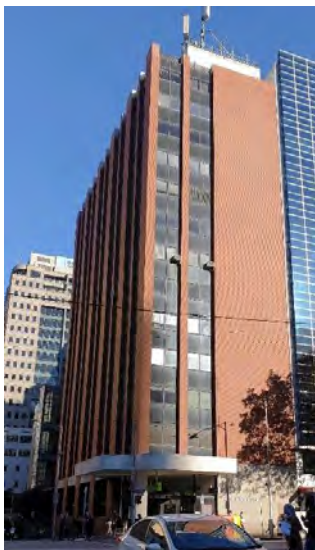
Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William Street  
(Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



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 State Savings Bank of Victoria building at 233-243 Queen 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 State Savings Bank Building clearly demonstrates this class of place.

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**ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA**


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✓	<p><b>CRITERION A</b> Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).</p>
	<p><b>CRITERION B</b> Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).</p>
	<p><b>CRITERION C</b> Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).</p>
✓	<p><b>CRITERION D</b> Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).</p>
	<p><b>CRITERION E</b> Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).</p>
	<p><b>CRITERION F</b> Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)</p>
	<p><b>CRITERION G</b> 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><b>CRITERION H</b> Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).</p>

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**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 Libraries online Heritage Collection, reference nos. as cited.

City of Melbourne Maps (CoMMaps), Site Details.

Goad, Phillip, Ed. (2003), *Judging Architecture*, Royal Australian Institute of Architects (Victoria).

Murphy, Guy & Bryce Raworth (2012), 'Godfrey & Spowers' in Philip Goad & Julie Willis's (Eds.) (2012), *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Port Melbourne.

*Progress*, State Savings Bank of Victoria Staff Magazine, via StateBank of Victoria Social Networking Site, <[http://www.statebankvictoria.org/?page\\_id=3698](http://www.statebankvictoria.org/?page_id=3698)>, accessed November 2019.

Sands & McDougall Directories (S&Mc).

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**PREVIOUS STUDIES**

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**Central Activities District  
Conservation Study 1985** Ungraded

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 1993** Ungraded

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

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011** Ungraded

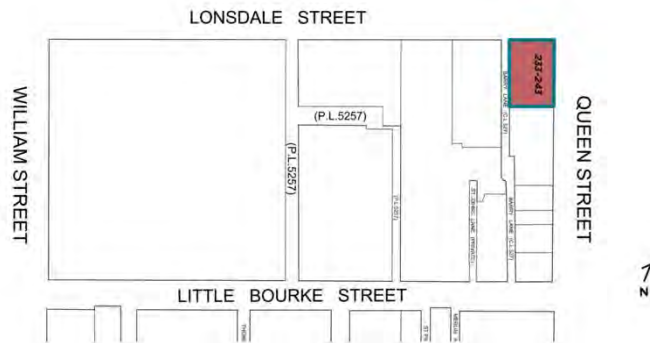
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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Former State Savings Bank of Victoria



**PS ref no:** HO1373XXXX



### What is significant?

The Former State Savings Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street, a multi-storey office building constructed in 1967-1968.

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 State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

Constructed in 1967-1968 to a design by Godfrey & Spowers Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, the Former State Savings Bank of Victoria 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 status afforded by a dominant city presence (Criterion A).

The Former State Savings Bank of Victoria 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 to the mid 1970s, particularly in central Melbourne. Constructed as a 10-storey building, the Former State Savings Bank of Victoria building clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a 1960s to

mid 1970s structure, including solid grid-like curtain wall facades of regularly spaced, frameless glazed openings set in plain dark brick facades and a highly prominent, contrasting podium base. These demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style (Criterion D).

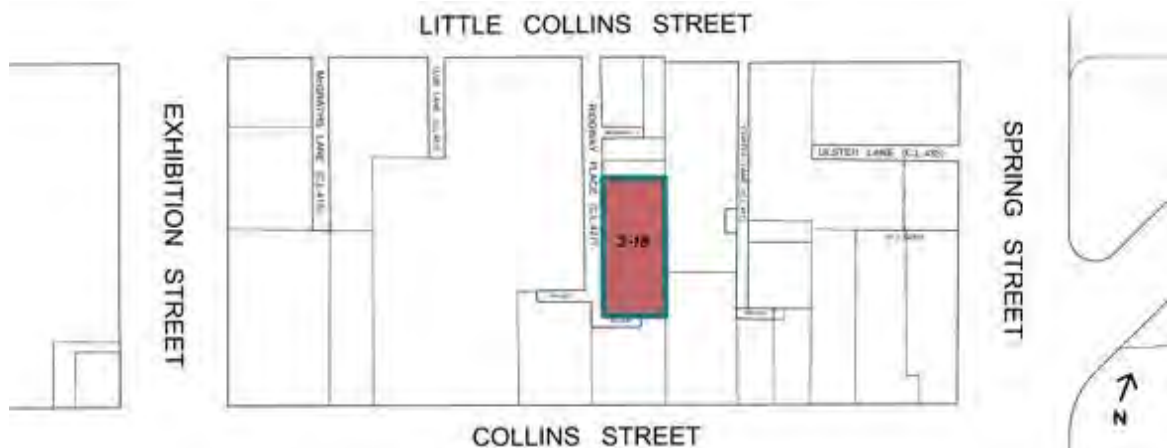
**Primary source**

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



<b>SITE NAME</b>	Lyceum Club
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	2-18 Ridgway Place, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	108274



**SURVEY DATE:** June 2017

**SURVEY BY:** Context

**HERITAGE INVENTORY**

H7822-1777

**EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY**

No

**PLACE TYPE**

Individual Place Type

**PROPOSED CATEGORY**

Significant

**FORMER GRADE**

D

**DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:**

Ellison Harvie

**BUILDER:**

Pollard Brothers

**DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:**

Postwar Period (1945-1965)

**DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:**

1959

## 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
8 Enjoying the city	8.3 Entertainment and socialising

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Not able to be determined
1920s	Not able to be determined
1960s	Clubs and Unions

## 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

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. It sits comfortably in its compact laneway location.



## 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.

### **Entertainment and socialising in the postwar period**

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.

### **SITE HISTORY**

The site of 2-18 Ridgway Place was originally purchased as part of the fifth Crown Land sale in 1839, with lanes and subdivisions developed by the same year. By 1850, a building had been constructed and in 1888, the site comprised seven houses. By 1905-06 there were six two-storey houses fronting a lane. (Fels, Lavelle & Mider 1993).

In 1959, the Lyceum Club opened its clubrooms at 2-18 Ridgway Place.

#### *The Lyceum Club*

The following history on the Lyceum Club has been taken from the National Trust file (B6902), which in turn has been extracted from the history in Allom Lovell and Associate's 1998 management plan for the Lyceum Club.

The Lyceum Club held its first meeting in 1912 at rented premises, the Brunton Chambers, at the corner of Elizabeth and Collins streets. After six years of operation, the club's 150 members had outgrown the space, and the Lyceum moved to the fifth floor of the Auditorium Building at 167 Collins Street. With the end of World War One, and the subsequent increased involvement of women in professional and public work, membership continued to rise. The new premises soon reached capacity, resulting in the Lyceum Club needing to limit membership numbers to 450 and create a temporary waiting list.

Membership increased from 500 in 1921 to 625 in 1922. In 1925 the Lyceum Club accepted an offer from the ES&A Bank to lease an empty floor within the Stock Exchange building. The club had the opportunity to adapt the space to meet its needs, with the architects devising a system of folding doors so that the main rooms could be opened to make one large room for special occasions. Later in 1925, the Lyceum Club's constitution was changed to allow for its incorporation under the

*Companies Act* of 1916. In 1928, the club's rules were altered to allow membership to increase from 800 to 1000, which it reached in the 1940s.

The Lyceum Club remained in the Stock Exchange building until 1934, when it moved to Bank House, at the corner of Collins and Queens streets. The planning of new premises at Bank House offered an opportunity to provide accommodation, with three bedrooms for guests made available on the third floor.

Membership after World War Two continued to rise and by 1947, in order to absorb the number of people on the waiting list, the Articles of Association were altered to allow membership to increase from 1000 to 1200. In 1956, the club was advised that Bank House would no longer be made available for its use. Architect member and associate in the partnership of architectural firm, Stephenson & Turner, Ellison Harvie, surveyed members regarding their wishes for future club premises. It was decided that the Lyceum Club should investigate the possibility of buying a property in the city and that members would be encouraged to take up £25 debentures.

After investigations, a block in Ridgway Place was chosen in 1957 as a potential site for the club's new premises. It was described at a special club meeting as being approximately 7000 square feet, on which six small two-storey houses stood, one of which remains today at 20 Ridgway Place. The cottages were once owned by the adjacent Melbourne Club, who used them as accommodation for its coachmen, but by the 1950s the houses were privately owned and tenanted. The Lyceum Club took up the option of the Ridgway Place site and purchased the land for £26,000 in 1957. A decision to demolish the cottages and construct a new building on the Ridgway Place site was made in May 1958.

The construction of the Lyceum Club's new building was coordinated by Ellison Harvie, with assistance from fellow architects Hilary Lewis and Jessie Madsen. The club was relocated to temporary accommodation provided by the ES&A Bank at 140 Flinders Lane.

Harvey's design for the new building included car parking, an entrance on the ground floor, dining room, kitchen and clubrooms on the first floor, with a small lounge and six bedrooms opening to a roof terrace on the second floor. The terrace and the full-length windows on the first floor overlooked the garden of the adjacent Melbourne Club. The tender for the construction of the building was awarded to Pollard Brothers for the sum of £75,857. The new building was officially opened by Lady Mayoress F W Thomas on 26 May 1959.

Over the next 10 years, various work on the building was undertaken by architects Stephenson & Turner. After Ellison Harvie retired from the practice in 1967, Stephenson & Turner continued to act as the club's regular architects. In 1972, extensive repairs were undertaken following flooding, which occurred after torrential rain in late 1971.

At the same time, the club appointed an honorary architect from its own members, Berenice Harris, who had been a director with the firm Romberg & Boyd since 1961. Harris's work over the next few years included minor works but culminated in the early 1980s when a large renovation program was implemented, including extensions, the construction of ensuite bathrooms and the installation of a lift. After Harris's retirement in the 1980s, the Lyceum Club's building and maintenance work became the responsibility of the local firm of Cunningham & Keddie. In addition to minor works over the years, the most substantial work undertaken by the firm was the fit-out of the library on the second floor, which involved the consolidation of three original bedrooms facing the sun terrace.

Other architect members of the Lyceum Club likely to have made contributions to the building over the years include Cynthea Teague, Ailsa Trundle, Lorna Phillips, Muriel Stott, Mary Turner Shaw, and Babs Delaney. Other notable local women professionals who have contributed to the building include artists Anne Montgomery (mural painting) and Bee Taplin (textiles), interior decorator Joyce Godfrey (club rooms and lounge), and landscape designer Millie Gibson.

In sum, the building was built and adapted regularly to meet the changing needs of the club and its membership. The organisation dates to 1912, and the building to 1959. The building was purpose built for the club and is its first permanent home (previous spaces were leased). Construction of the building enabled an expansion of the membership of the club and development of facilities for members. The Club's first president was Pattie Deakin, wife of the prime minister Alfred Deakin, and many of its early members were among the first female professionals in their particular fields: Dr Constance Ellis (medicine), Christian Jollie Smith (law), and Marion Mahoney Griffin (architecture). As a result of bequests and member donations, the Lyceum Club houses an important collection of furniture, artwork and reference books (National Trust 2005).

*Ellison Harvie, architect*

The Australian Dictionary of Biography contains this entry for Ellison Harvey:

*Edythe Ellison Harvie (1902-1984), architect joined Sir Arthur Stephenson in his recently established firm in 1921 and remained there throughout her professional life.*

*In 1925-28 Harvie attended the Melbourne University Architectural Atelier (1925-28), where she excelled, her work being later recognised in the award of a diploma of architectural design (1938) - the first received by a woman. Registered as an architect and elected an associate (1928) of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects, Harvie specialised in hospital architecture, a field in which Stephenson & Meldrum gained an international reputation. She led work on the Jessie Macpherson wing of the Queen Victoria Hospital (1928), and on designs for the St Vincent's (1933), Mercy (1934, 1937-39) and Freemasons (1935) hospitals...*

*Harvie was made an associate of the new partnership Stephenson & Turner in 1938 and soon placed in charge of work on the Royal Melbourne Hospital...In 1946 she was made a partner of the firm and elected a fellow of the RVIA—the first woman to gain this status. She was also a member of the Royal Institute of British Architects and, later, a life fellow of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects.*

*A committed modernist, Harvie drew much of her inspiration from the innovative institutional work she observed during travels through the United States of America and Europe. Deploring the lack of architectural appreciation in Australia, she served on the RVIA's Board of Architectural Education (1946-56) and on the board of the University of Melbourne's faculty of architecture (1945-73).*

*Harvie also became an advocate for the professional development of women, urging their full participation in public life and an end to discrimination against them in employment. She continued to work on hospitals until her retirement from full-time practice in 1968, but also designed two buildings specifically serving women: The Lyceum Club (1959) and St Hilda's*

*College (1963), University of Melbourne. The former has an elegance typical of late 1950s modernism; the latter, in spare, pale brick, is tempered with modest references to the traditions of collegial gothic...*

*Ellison Harvie was president (1963-65) of the Lyceum Club and a foundation member (1948) and honorary treasurer of the Melbourne Soroptomist Club...She died at East Melbourne on 27 September 1984 and was buried in Boroondara cemetery, Kew (Edquist 2007).*

The Lyceum Club was one of only two commissions Harvie accepted outside the Stephenson & Turner office (National Trust 2005).

#### *Stephenson & Turner, architects*

The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture contains the following information about Stephenson & Turner:

*At its peak, Stephenson & Turner was Australia's largest architecture firm, with offices in Melbourne, Sydney, Newcastle, New Zealand and Hong Kong. It was formed in 1921 by A. G. Stephenson and Percy Meldrum as Stephenson & Meldrum, after both had returned to Australia after WWI, having met at London's Architectural Association. The firm had relatively modest beginnings, with a range of projects and clients, including the State Savings Bank of Victoria (Its chairman, Sir William McBeath, had encouraged Stephenson to return to Melbourne to set up a practice.) The firm's first hospital client, the Melbourne Children's Hospital in 1925, and a proposed reform to the hospital system, prompted Stephenson to imagine a new direction for his fledgling firm and he audaciously borrowed money to take an extensive overseas trip in 1926-27 to the United States and Canada to gather intelligence and experience with a view to becoming a firm specialising in hospitals...*

*The firm established a Sydney office in 1934 led by Donald Keith Turner, and were known in NSW from 1935 as Stephenson, Meldrum & Turner, taking on several large hospital projects including Gloucester House at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Sydney (1936) ... Meldrum was becoming increasingly uncomfortable with Stephenson's interest in taking on more hospital work...The result was a very rapid and acrimonious split in the partnership...*

*Turner and Stephenson continued as Stephenson & Turner, continuing their hospital work during WWII, and afterwards promoted a number of their associates, such as Ellison Harvie, Geoffrey Moline and John D. Fisher, to partners. Beyond their hospital work, the firm also undertook key industrial complexes, commercial office buildings, banks, town plans (including Shepparton (1946) and the Australian pavilions at the Paris Exposition (1937) and the New York World's Fair (1939-40).*

## **COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS**

Establishing its own club premises at 2-18 Ridgway Place in 1958, the Lyceum Club, as an organisation has been highly influential in the lives of generations of Victorian women. There is a direct association between the organisation, membership and the building that has endured for nearly 60 years.

With its large influx of immigrants, Melbourne was a city that inspired and promoted literature and art, movements that were accompanied by the establishment of art and literary clubs and societies. One such club was the Lyceum Club, established in 1912:

*had its origins in the Woman Writers' Club, founded ten years earlier by the three female members of the Institute of Journalists who, excluded from the institute's premises, wanted a place to meet and write. In 1912 they joined with the group of women active in philanthropic and community work, education, science and the arts who had met through the 1907 Women's Work Exhibition, and members of the Catalysts, a women's discussion group, founded in 1910. The first overseas group to affiliate with the London Lyceum, the Club was open to university graduates and women who had achieved distinction in their own right. Its purpose was evident in a series of 'circles' that allowed members to learn new skills or discuss social problems (Swain 2008).*

The Lyceum Club is considered to be of social significance for its association with a community of professional women. The relevant significance indicators include:

- The community or cultural group has a deep sense of ownership/stewardship and/or connectedness to the place or object
- The place is important to this community's sense identity
- Important as a place of community service (including health, education, worship, pastoral care, communications, emergency services, museums, etc.)

It may also be important to this community as an 'Important as a place of collective socialisation'.

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

The Lyceum Club is located at the end of the narrow laneway Ridgway Lane, which runs off Little Collins Street, towards the eastern end of the CBD. The long narrow building runs over several addresses (numbers 2-18). It faces the high masonry wall of the Melbourne Club across the laneway. Although comprised of three levels, the building fits appropriately in the laneway setting, without appearing to dominate the confined space.

The middle storey is cantilevered over the ground floor and the flat roofed profile of this level results in a low section that presents as a horizontal band running the full length of the building. In keeping with the modern aesthetic, the building has an unadorned façade, with primary aesthetic interest derived from the arrangement of structural elements, and most notably, windows. Identical bays of timber framed windows run the full length of the building, giving a distinctive pattern and rhythm to the façade. Main meeting rooms and functions areas are located on this level.

Entry to the building is from street level. The compact entry foyer has extensive glazing and a textured cream brick wall. The internal stair is visible from the entry point. A row of equally spaced concrete columns runs along the build line. The open spaces on this level are used for car parking. Metal screens between the columns are a later addition.

The contemporary garage roller doors obscuring the ground floor space and entry of the building are still used by the Lyceum Club. An upper floor and alterations to the building were completed in 2018, designed by KTA Architects. This has respected and added to the original design.



Figure 1. Aerial Photo by Wolfgang Sievers, 1976 (Source: Sievers 1976).

### **INTEGRITY**

Extensive alterations and extensions have occurred at the upper level in 2017-18, undertaken by KTA Architects. This has succeeded in adapting the building to the changing needs of the Lyceum Club and its members. Extensive works were also undertaken in 1981 when a seminar room was added to the upper level. Currently the built form extends to the building edge in two locations on the upper floor. This alteration impacts somewhat on the reading of the middle level as a single horizontal band. However, the façade of the important middle level remains intact and the design intent of the original arrangement is still clear.

### **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

The Lyceum Club as an organisation has been highly influential in the lives of generations of Victorian women. There is a direct association between the organisation, its membership and the building that has endured for nearly 60 years. The only other known women's club, the Alexandra Club is primarily a private hotel for rural and regional women and has a different mission.

*The Alexandra Club, 81 Collins Street, 1934 (HO568, HO504 Collins Street East precinct)*

The Alexandra Club was designed by Anketell & K Henderson in 1937. It features a neo-Georgian brick façade of five storeys. The interior retains its' 1930s design in decorative columns and coffered ceiling, concierge's cabin and lift lobby.



Figure 2. 81 Collins Street, Alexandra Club constructed 1934. (Source: CoMMaps)

As a place, the Lyceum Club compares with several other modern buildings and/or former clubs. In conceiving more modest city buildings, some architects embraced the modernist theme of apparent weightlessness, where, like the Lyceum Club at 2-18 Ridgway Place, the upper floor(s) projected above a recessed ground floor (National Trust 2014:73). This was also achieved in other buildings such as:

*Sapphire House, 11-25 Crossley Street, 1957 (HO500 Bourke Hill Precinct)*

Built 1957, Sapphire House is a two-storey brick masonry building with recessed glazing within protruding white window frames (National Trust 2014:73).



Figure 3. 11-25 Crossley Street constructed 1957. (Source: CoMMaps)



*Latrobe Photographic Studios, 152 Little Lonsdale Street, 1964*

Designed by architect Harry Ernest in 1964, two levels of office space (expressed externally with alternating bays of windows and wide brick piers) project over a fully-glazed ground floor level (National Trust 2014:73).

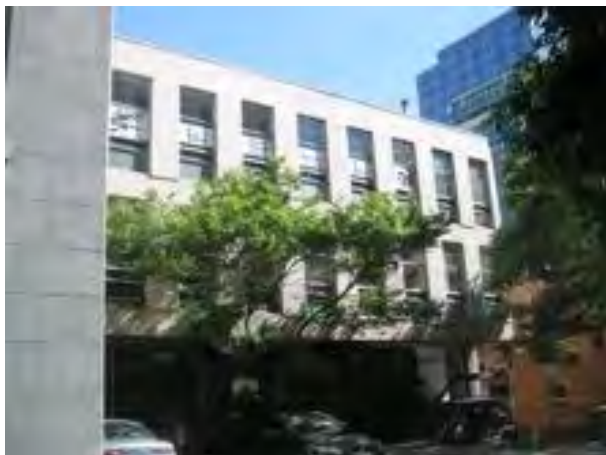


Figure 4. 152-156 Little Lonsdale Street constructed 1964. (Source: CoMMaps)

*RACV Club, 111-129 Queen Street, 1959-61 (Interim HO1068)*

Designed by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, the elevated masonry clad block rests on stilts above the podium as discrete and well formulated massing, the stilts or columns being visible as they pass through the podium on the south side. The tower block appears to float above the façade and when combined with the glazed podium, gives the lightness and clarity of purpose sought by modernist designers.



Figure 5. 111-129 Queen Street constructed 1959-61. (Source: CoMMaps)

### **Analysis**

The Lyceum Club as an organisation historically and socially has few peers in Melbourne, with the Alexandra Club being the only other known private women's club in the city. Today the Lyceum Club and the Alexandra Club at 81 Collins Street both provide private clubs for women with the Lyceum catering specifically for professional women.

It is one of only two private commissions by pioneering architect Ellison Harvie, outside her role at Stephenson & Turner.

As a place, the Lyceum Club, including its recent extensions and alterations, is a representative example of hybrid modern and contemporary architecture, comprising the 1959 building and the 2018 extension.

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**ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA**


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✓	<p><b>CRITERION A</b> Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).</p>
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	<p><b>CRITERION C</b> Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).</p>
	<p><b>CRITERION D</b> Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).</p>
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✓	<p><b>CRITERION H</b> Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).</p>

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**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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**PREVIOUS STUDIES**

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**Central Activities District  
Conservation Study 1985** D

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 1993** D

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

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011** Ungraded

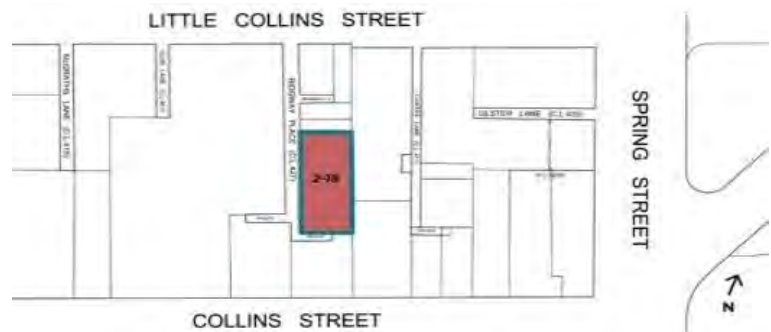
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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Lyceum Club



**PS ref no:** HO1285XXXX



### What is significant?

The Lyceum Club at 2-18 Ridgeway Place, Melbourne, designed by architect Ellison Harvie and completed in 1959.

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 continuous use as a women's club.

### How it is significant?

The Lyceum Club at 2-18 Ridgeway Place is of local historic, social and associative significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

Historically, the Lyceum Club is significant as a purpose-built club house, designed by and for women. Importantly, the 1957 building commission and all subsequent alterations and additions, have involved local women architects from the original design and construction by Ellison Harvie, to subsequent work by Hilary Lewis, Jessie Madsen, Berenice Harris, Cunningham & Keddie and KTA (Kerstin Thompson

Architects). Other notable local women professionals who have contributed to the design of the building include artists Anne Montgomery (mural painting) and Bee Taplin (textiles), interior decorator Joyce Godfrey (club rooms and lounge), and landscape designer Millie Gibson. This tradition of continuous and almost exclusively female design input on the one project, over a sustained period has few precedents (National Trust 2005). (Criterion A)

Historically, 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. As a result of bequests and member donations, the Lyceum Club houses an important collection of furniture, artwork and reference books (National Trust 2005). (Criterion A)

The Lyceum Club is of social significance for its strong and enduring association with the organisation and its membership. The building reflects the aspirations and needs of the organisation in providing and sustaining a place of social congregation and intellectual exchange amongst professional women. (Criterion G)

The Lyceum Club is significant for its association with its designer, architect Ellison Harvie. Harvie, as a member of the Club and a partner in the firm of Stephenson & Turner, was the first woman to gain a Diploma of Architectural Design from the Architectural Atelier in 1938, and the first Australian woman to be nominated as a Fellow of the RIBA in 1949. Her work at Stephenson & Turner contributed to the design of numerous major hospitals in Sydney and Melbourne, including the Royal Melbourne Hospital in 1942. (Criterion H)

The Lyceum Club is associated with many highly regarded women including the first president, Pattie Deakin and many of its early members were among the first female professionals in their particular fields including Dr Constance Ellis (medicine), Christian Jollie Smith (law), and Marion Mahoney Griffin (architecture) (National Trust 2005). (Criterion H)

### **Primary source**

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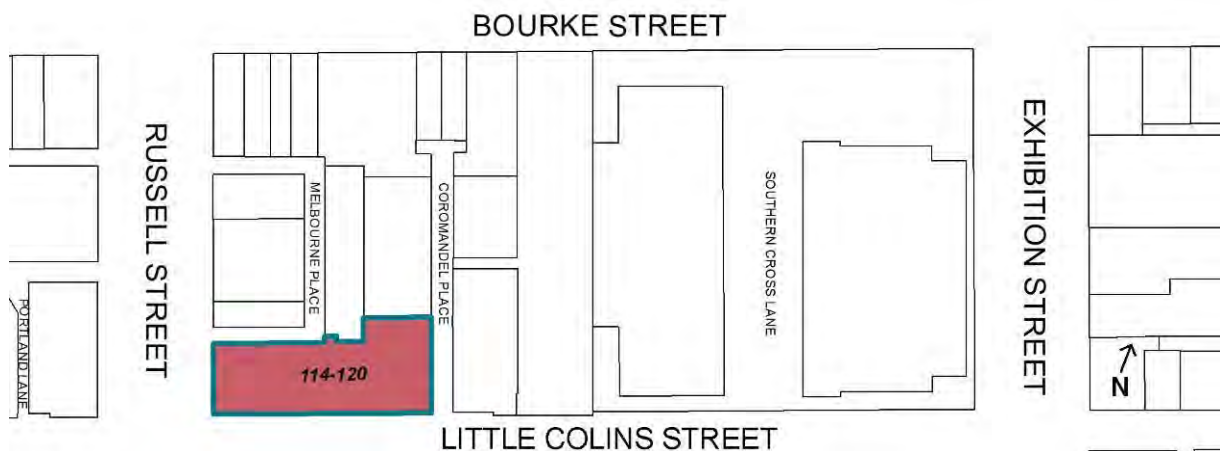
[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\)](#)~~Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)~~ [Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\) \(updated March 2022\)](#)



**SITE NAME** Former Russell Street Automatic Telephone Exchange and Postal Building [Hero Apartments (current name)]

**STREET ADDRESS** 114-120 Russell Street, Melbourne

**PROPERTY ID** 108591



**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** B

**DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:** Commonwealth Department of Works (1948-54), Nonda Katsaildis (1999-2001)

**BUILDER:** Probuild Constructions (1999-2001)

**DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:** Postwar Period (1945-1975)

**DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:** 1948-1954, 1999-2001

## 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
2 Governing, administering and policing the city	2.1 Commonwealth government

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Retail and residential
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 former Russell Street Automatic Telephone Exchange and Postal Building, now Hero Apartments, at 114-120 Russell Street Melbourne, was constructed by the Commonwealth government in 1948-54 in the interwar Functionalist style to a design by the Commonwealth Department of Works.

## 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.

### 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 building at 114-120 Russell Street was constructed in two distinct phases: the first between 1948-1954 when it was built as the Russell Street Automatic Telephone Exchange and Postal Building. A second phase of development, spanning 1999 to 2001, saw the exchange and postal building converted to the Hero Apartments tower (Hermes record for '114-120 Russell Street, Melbourne').

### *Russell Street Automatic Telephone Exchange and Postal Building: 1948-c1999*

The land comprising the subject site is part of Crown Allotments 19 and 17 of Block 10, first purchased in 1837 by Anthony Hordern of Sydney, and Charles Williams of Melbourne (CoMMaps; Badman 1892 & S&Mc 1892). A row of narrow Victorian buildings ranging from one to three storeys in

height and numbered 114-120 Russell Street, and 154-136 Little Collins Street, were built between 1885 and 1890 (MMBW 1018,1895; S&Mc 1885, 1890).

In 1946, the Commonwealth Department of Public Works acquired the subject site, whose buildings it described as some of the oldest and most dilapidated in Melbourne (Commonwealth of Australia 1945-46). The Department of Public Works prepared plans for the Russell Street Automatic Telephone Exchange and Postal Building in the same year (Commonwealth of Australia 1945-46).

The Russell Street Automatic Telephone Exchange and Postal Building, opened in 1954, was the first large building constructed in the city after 1940 and, according to the National Trust citation, it was the last to express the solid, masonry architectural traditions that were typical of architecture before World War Two (see Figure 1) (National Trust 2008; *Age* 15 September 1954:2). Carried to the City of Melbourne height limit of 40 metres (132 feet) and divided into nine storeys, the building was one of the tallest in the city at the time of its completion (see Figure 2) (*Age* 15 September 1954:2).



Figure 1. photograph of the Russell Street Telephone Exchange and Postal Building in 1956 (Source: Sievers 1956, SLV: accession no: H99.50/299 copyright)



Figure 2. Aerial view of the Telephone Exchange and Postal Building, Russell Street, Melbourne, Victoria 1954-60. (Source: Charles Pratt and Airspy 1954-56, SLV copyright)

Construction was slow and expensive; taking six and a half years and costing £1 million, over double the initial estimates (*Age* 15 September 1954:2). On completion of construction, the design was described as belonging to a 'past-era' and the cost to taxpayers was lamented (*Age* 15 September 1954:2).

Associated with the building was a 1600 feet telephone cable tunnel from Flinders Lane to Bourke Street (*Age* 15 September 1954:2). Bendigo miners cut the tunnel that descended 30 feet below Russell Street (see Figure 3). A Federal Parliamentary Accounts Committee inquiring into the cost of the building in 1953 found that the inflated price was in part due to changing labour conditions following the war, including a marginal increase in the basic wage; as well as the shortage of local building materials and, consequently, the increased cost of imported materials, including the cement

used in the building, imported at an increased cost of 204%, and much of the steel which was also purchased at an inflated price (*Age* 15 September 1954:2).

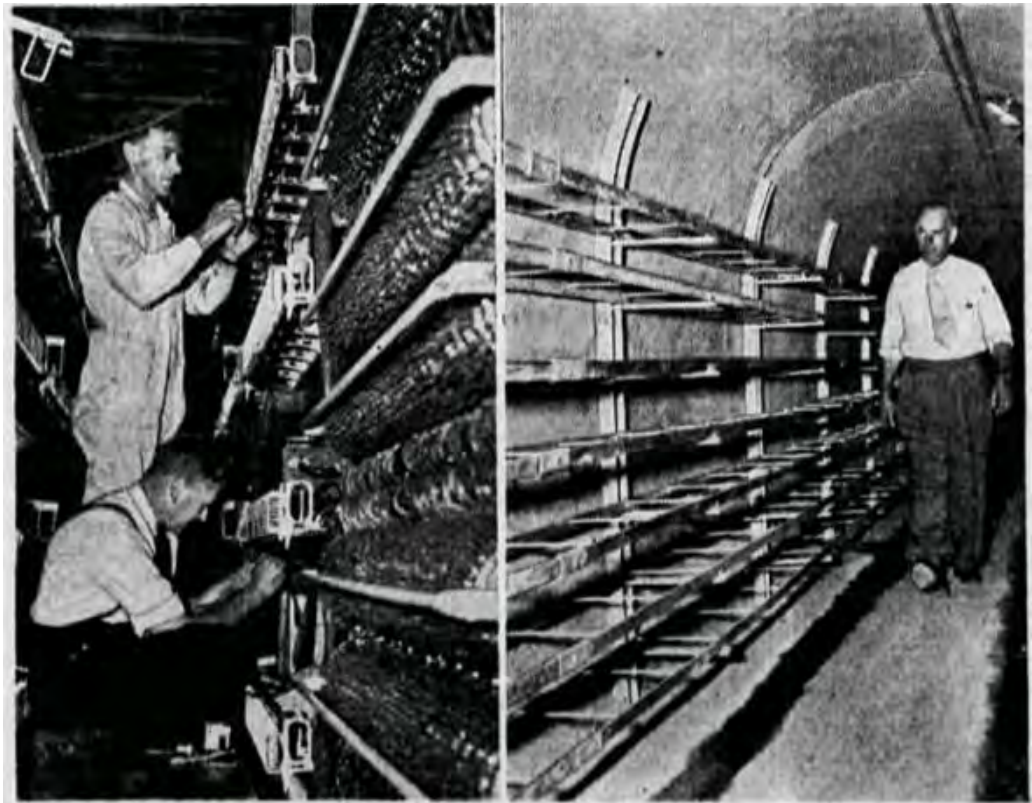


Figure 3. Photograph showing underground tunnels with telephone wires installed upon completion of the Exchange building's construction. (Source: *Age* 31 March 1954:5)

The automatic exchange was constructed to house 20,000 telephone lines (*Age* 27 March 1954:11).

Use of the Automatic Telephone Exchange and Postal Building was distributed across the building as follows:

- The ground floor was used as a postal hall.
- The basement, first, second and third floors were fitted with automatic telephone equipment.
- The fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh floors were subdivided, using terracotta block partitions, into departmental office space.
- The eighth floor comprised a cafeteria (Commonwealth of Australia 1945-46).

The postal hall was fitted with an elaborate interior with an Italian Modernist influence, and featured a striped floor, metal grill work, stainless steel telephone booths and substantial pink granite stylised Doric columns (Hero Apartments 2018). Sculptors S J Hammond and G H Allan designed the low-bas relief sculpture on the western elevation of the building, fronting Russell Street and a 300kg timepiece affixed to the exterior of the building in 1954 (see Figure 4). The subject building also reputedly contained the first air-conditioned postal hall in Australia (*Age* 8 September 1955:4; VHD 2008)



Figure 4. Extract from photograph showing the 6cw (approximately 300kg) timepiece being installed at Russell Street Exchange building in 1954. (Source: *Age* 23 July 1954:8)

After the initial changeover in November 1953, 3000 telephone lines were progressively moved in 1954-1955 from the Central Exchange on Lonsdale Street (installed in 1911) to Russell Street (*Age* 27 March 1954:11; Commonwealth of Australia 1945-46). In 1956 the building served as a relay station for the newly arrived television services.

Constructed during a period of architectural and economic stagnation in Victoria, Miles Lewis maintains that the former Telephone Exchange and Postal Building was one of 'the last vestiges of the mannered metropolitan architecture of the 1930s' (Lewis et al 1993:224). By 1955 there were 48 major building projects either recently finished or being erected in Melbourne, including the first glass curtain walled building in the city at 100 Collins Street, which represented the strikingly different style of Modernism (*Age* 8 September 1955:4; VHD 2008).

The building continued to function as a postal building and telephone exchange until c1998, when it was offered for sale by tender (see Figure 5) (*Age* 9 May 1998:105).

From May to July 1999, the Russell Street Telephone Exchange building was used as a major exhibition venue during the first Melbourne International Biennial (*Age* 14 May 1999:48).



Figure 5. Photograph from 1998, showing the building shortly before the sale. (Age 9 May 1998:105)

#### *Hero Apartments: 1999-2001*

Between 1999 and 2001 the building was converted into a residential tower. Nonda Katsilidis, then practising as Nation Fender Katsalidis, was the lead architect of the six-storey addition and apartment conversion. Probuild Constructions carried out the works (FK 2006). According to Fender Katsalidis, the six-storey roof top addition was designed to counterpoint the Telephone Exchange building's 1940s cubic geometry, with the addition expressed in modern vernacular, 'accentuated by a materials' palette predominated by Corten steel and galvanised iron'. The architects described the additions as a 'dramatic and richly detailed skyline sculpture [that]...celebrates the here and now, while re-validating the integrity of the site's architectural past' (FK 2006).

The tower presently contains 112 residential properties, one business, eight retail shops and four food and drink outlets (CoMMaps).

#### *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. There was a period of intensive works 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).

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

The former Russell Street Automatic Telephone Exchange and Postal Building at 114-120 Russell Street was originally a nine-storey building designed in the interwar Functionalist style and opened in 1954 to the 40 metre (132 foot) height limit then in force in central Melbourne. Although it was constructed after 1945, the building has a strong horizontal emphasis and other characteristics typical of the interwar Functionalist style; however, it also demonstrates a number of eclectic and innovative features that are more derivative than characteristic of the style.

The subject site is located at the corner of Russell and Little Collins Street. To the north of the property is Melbourne Place. The building has a narrow frontage to Russell Street, but is on a very deep block that extends a considerable distance along Little Collins Street to the east.

The building structure is of reinforced concrete post and slab construction. The original façades to Russell Street and Little Collins Street are constructed in light coloured non-loadbearing brickwork laid in stretcher bond. Both elevations are heavily articulated with projecting windows and other elements, and the perimeter framing for these windows is of glazed terracotta (or faience), rather than concrete or rendered brick as is usually the case. Most of the projecting window modules are in repetitive square or vertically proportioned modules rather than strong horizontal forms linking multiple window panels usually associated with the interwar Functionalist style. These more typical interwar Functionalist forms are present, but are limited to the first and second floors on both elevations, as well as the top level below the projecting roof cornice. The first floor horizontal panel on Russell Street frames an artwork in the 'Surrealist' style that has been placed over the original first floor bay of windows (refer figure 2).

In general, the windows appear to be original steel (or possibly aluminium) framed windows with some opening sashes as the building predates the widespread use of air conditioning. The building features a large and dramatic recessed entry space on the Russell Street frontage, surmounted by a lintel clad in glazed terracotta and supported on three circular columns clad in granite. Adjacent to the entry is also a bass relief sculpture attached to the wall at ground level which is a common element of a high-quality building of this period and intended to be enjoyed by the public.

Between 1999 and 2001 the building was converted to an apartment complex, including the addition of six additional storeys above the original roof and other alterations within the original structure, including the insertion of balconies, to the design of architects Nation Fender Katsalidis.

The additional storeys are primarily of metal and glass, separated from and floating above the original building with a deep undercroft. There are two large vertical fins crossing the floors of the extension on Little Collins Street, which terminate above the roof of the extension with an 'Art Deco' flourish. A number of original windows have been removed to create balconies, however this does not disrupt the rhythm of the elevation despite the glazing line being moved back. Two new vertically proportioned windows have been inserted at the third and fourth floor levels to the Russell Street façade, and are surrounded by an overscaled 'bar code' motif. Overall, the contrast between the form and detail of the original building and the additions, and the design and material quality of both, results in an interesting and complimentary architectural composition.



## INTEGRITY

The original nine-storey building is largely intact with the original face brickwork, projecting steel framed windows with projecting glazed terracotta faience frames, glazed terracotta lintel to the entry supported on three granite clad circular columns and bas relief sculpture still evident.

Alterations and additions completed in 1999-2001 include the addition of six storeys above the original roof line, projecting balconies to the Little Collins Street elevation, the removal of a number of windows along Little Collins Street to create recessed balconies and the addition of two windows to the Russell Street elevation with 'bar code' decorative panel.

Although the 1999-2001 alterations and additions to the building have had some impact on the authenticity and integrity of the earlier building designed by the Commonwealth Department of Works, the original building remains clearly legible as a high quality, if somewhat eclectic, example of the interwar Functionalist style and its architectural qualities have not been overwhelmed by the additional forms. Therefore, despite the alterations, overall the building is of high integrity.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

After the end of the World War Two, building activities in the central city slowly revived during the early 1950s. Structural steel and reinforced concrete framing became popular building materials in interwar period and continued to be used extensively in postwar Melbourne construction, inspired by Chicagoan architecture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Departing from load-bearing brick walls, these new building methods allowed windows to become larger and more prominent on facades, whilst also facilitating increased building heights.

In the 1930s and 1940s new lower scale buildings such as factories and other modern service facilities such as car showrooms often utilised the interwar Functionalist style, emphasising a modern aesthetic and characterised by its progressive image using 'streamlined' horizontal spandrels and extensive horizontal bands of glazing. However, in the period prior to and following World War Two, the style was also used for some high-rise commercial buildings, including the Russell Street Automatic Telephone Exchange and Postal Building, designed by the Commonwealth Department of Works.

The following examples are comparable with the former Russell Street Automatic Telephone Exchange and Postal Building, although their 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 treatment of the façade with a combination brick masonry with a glass curtain wall sections.



Figure 6. 376-382 Flinders Lane, built in 1956. (Source: Context 2018)

*Lonsdale Exchange Building, 447-453 Lonsdale Street, 1969 (Recommended as individually significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review)*

The Lonsdale Exchange Building at 447-453 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne was built in 1969 by P D C Construction to a design by the Commonwealth Department of Public Works. The 15-storey building, built in the Post-War Modernist and Brutalist styles, replaced an earlier telephone exchange on the site.



Figure 7. 447-453 Lonsdale Street, built in 1969.

The former Russell Street Automatic Telephone Exchange and Postal Building at is an example of a substantial multi-storey building designed broadly in the interwar Functionalist style, and completed during the postwar years 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, making it difficult to compare with other examples.

Nevertheless, some comparison can be drawn with other examples of postwar telephone exchanges in the City of Melbourne, also designed by the Commonwealth Department of Works, including the

Lonsdale Exchange Building, the former Batman Exchange (both recommended as individually significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review), and the Telstra City West Exchange Building at 436 Little Bourke Street (HO1054). The former Batman Exchange is particularly comparable, as a high quality building from the period that shares some of the characteristics of the Russell Street Automatic Telephone Exchange and Postal Building. The two buildings share a similar scale, a façade of light coloured non-loadbearing brickwork articulated with projecting windows, two repetitive top levels, and vertically-proportioned modules rather than strong horizontal forms linking multiple window panels that is usually associated with the interwar Functionalist style. While the main glazing element for the Flinders Lane building has expanded to a large multi-level expanse of windows constructed as a curtain wall that anticipates the dominant curtain wall facades of the later Post-War Modernist style, the expressed glazed curtain wall element is framed by a projecting masonry frame that is characteristic of the interwar Functionalist style.

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 early postwar Melbourne buildings that demonstrate some key aspects of the Post-War Modernist style as well as some other styles (including Brutalist style, and the interwar Functionalist style, for the subject building), 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 currently included in the City of Melbourne Heritage Overlay.

## ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

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

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significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).

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**CRITERION H**

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

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**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**

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**Central Activities District  
Conservation Study 1985** D

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 1993** B

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

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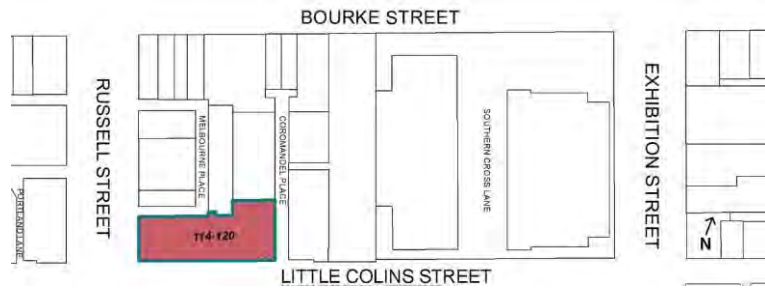
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### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Former Russell Street Automatic Telephone Exchange and Postal Building



**PS ref no:** HO1374XXXX







### What is significant?

The former Russell Street Automatic Telephone Exchange and Postal Building at 114-120 Russell Street, Melbourne, originally constructed as a nine-storey telephone exchange and postal hall in 1948-54 is significant.

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

- The building's original building-external form and scale;
- eOriginal pattern of fenestration, including projecting glazed terracotta (faience) clad horizontal and vertical frames to window openings and horizontal bands of glazing;
- rRecessed entry on the Russell Street frontage including a faience-clad lintel supported by circular columns clad in granite;
- eOriginal steel/aluminium frame windows; ~~and~~
- bBas relief sculpture to the Russell Street façade at the ground level.

Later alterations are not significant.

### How it is significant?

The former Russell Street Automatic Telephone Exchange and Postal Building at 114-120 Russell Street is of historical, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

The former Russell Street Telephone Exchange and Postal Building, opened in 1954, is historically significant for the evidence it provides of the broadening of Commonwealth powers after World War Two, a shift that resulted in increased construction of Commonwealth buildings in city centres including Melbourne. The former Russell Street Telephone Exchange and Postal Building is historically significant as one of the first large buildings constructed in the city after World War Two, and is the last to express the solid masonry, architectural traditions typical of the era prior to World War Two. The building also reputedly contained the first air-conditioned postal hall in Australia. (Criterion A)

The former Russell Street Automatic Telephone Exchange and Postal Building is significant as a largely intact example of a substantial public building in central Melbourne built to the 40 metre (132 foot) height limit then in force. The interwar Functionalist style adopted for the building was popular during the interwar and early postwar periods, often for low rise industrial buildings, schools and institutional buildings, for its modern, progressive aesthetic. Designed by the Commonwealth Department of Works, which was responsible for a number of high quality major public buildings during the period (such as the telephone exchange building at 376-382 Flinders Lane), the building demonstrates a commitment to the high-quality architectural design for major public buildings by the Commonwealth Department of Works. (Criterion D)

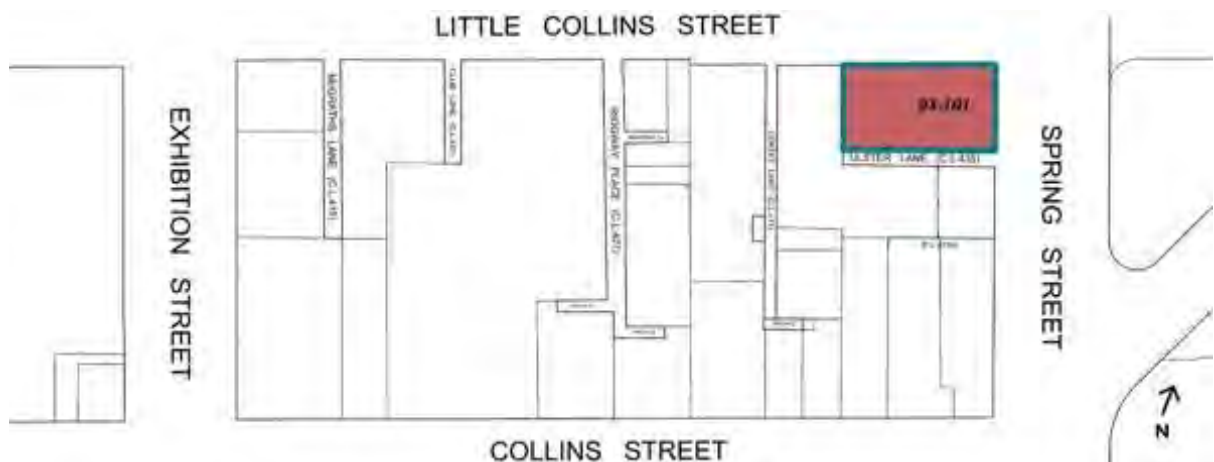
The former Russell Street Automatic Telephone Exchange and Postal Building has several unique features that contribute to its aesthetic significance. Although built following World War Two, the building exhibits elements of the interwar Functionalist style that are characteristic of a pre-World War Two modernist character. This includes its large and dramatic recessed entry space on the Russell Street frontage, surmounted by glazed terracotta lintel and supported on three circular granite columns adjacent to a bass relief sculpture attached to the facade. (Criterion E)

#### **Primary source**

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

<b>SITE NAME</b>	Treasury Gate
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	93-101 Spring Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	108982



**SURVEY DATE:** November 2018

**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:**

Moore & Hammond Pty Ltd

**BUILDER:**

Leighton Contractors Pty Ltd

**DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:**

Postwar Period (1945-1975)

**DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:**

1971

## 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
5 Living in the city centre	5.1 Housing and lodging

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Hotels and lodgings
1920s	Hotels
1960s	Car parks, retail, office, residential

## 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

Designed by architects Moore and Hammond in 1971, this modern residential apartment building is an early example of this building type in Melbourne. It is distinctly modernist in form and aesthetic, and suggestive of the Brutalist style in its deliberate expression of concrete and brick.

## 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 Kollé & 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).

### **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 land at 93-101 Spring Street was part of the Crown Allotment 9, Section 9, purchased by A McKillop. Located on the corner of Spring and Little Collins streets, the site was associated with hotels dating from the 1850s. The Ulster Family Hotel or Ulster Hotel was established on the site in the 1850s and was later renamed as the New Treasury Hotel in 1876 (S&Mc 1859-1876).

The New Treasury Hotel was sold in 1950 and again in 1967. An auction notice in 1967 described the site as having an investment potential suited for a maximum high-rise redevelopment (*Age* 12 August 1950:35; *Age* 18 October 1967:np). The property was sold for \$42 a square foot, approximately one third of the estimated value (*Age* 8 June 1971:19).

In 1969, the project group Treasury Gate Pty Ltd was established to develop the block at a cost of more than \$5 million (*Age* 25 October 1969:7). Treasury Gate Pty Ltd was formed by a number of local businesses including:

- J V Edgar & Co Pty Ltd, project consultants and managing agents,
- Moore & Hammond Pty Ltd, architects,
- Rider Hunt & Partners, quantity surveyors,
- W L & W L Meinhardt, structural engineers,
- Kuttner Collins & Partners, mechanical engineers,
- R Terenyi & Associates, electrical engineers,
- Leighton Contractors Ltd, building contractors, and
- Russell Kennedy & Cook, solicitors (J V Edgar & Co Pty Ltd 1969).

J V Edgar & Co Pty Ltd was initially declared as the sole selling agency, and later partnered with Abercromby & Beatty Pty Ltd and K Gardner & Lang Pty Ltd (*Age* 7 July 1973:5).

J Edgar told the *Age* in 1971 that the project would be different from earlier city apartments, which struggled to attract local residents still reluctant to buy inner-city residences. Edgar emphasised that, while other early apartments were aimed at city workers, 93-101 Spring Street was designed as a premium apartment building targeted at a higher income bracket (*Age* 17 February 1971:12).

Designed by architects Moore & Hammond, the 28-floor block comprised 19 residential floors, four levels of office spaces, a recreation floor, ground level retail floor and three levels of underground parking areas (Figure 1). According to the pre-development building catalogue provided by J V Edgar Pty Ltd, smaller sized duplexes were part of the original plan, but were not proceeded with (J V Edgar Pty Ltd c1969:5). The building opened in May 1971 (*Age* 24 April 1971:50).



The top five residential levels were reserved for penthouses apartments, with two apartments per floor on levels 20 to 23, and a single roof penthouse on level 24. The roof penthouse was to be developed and designed to the purchaser's own requirements (J V Edgar Pty Ltd c1969:6). The penthouse apartments, featuring more windows than typical units, were designed for panoramic views over the city.



Figure 1. The development plan for 93-101 Spring Street, with floor levels coloured over the elevation plan in different shades as per proposed uses (Source: J V Edgar Pty Ltd c1969:9).

From levels 12 to 19, two different types of apartments were planned, each on either the north or south side of the building, and centred on a service core of lifts and stairs. The floor plans of the apartments varied slightly to allow good views in all directions. Some differences applied in internal organisation: both A and B type of apartments had two bedrooms, one with an en-suite and the other with a dressing room; two bathrooms and a guest powder room; den; living room; dining room; kitchen; entrance hall; and a lobby and balcony facing Spring Street. The dining, living and hall areas were separated by slide screens for more internal flexibility (J V Edgar Pty Ltd c1969:4). These plans were able to be amended as per the buyer's requests.

Overlooking the city down Little Collins Street, the fifth-floor recreation space featured a heated swimming pool, a sauna, a Cabana reception area with a bar, entertaining facilities, and a gymnasium. There were also studio apartments and one-bed caretaker flats for in-house staff (J V Edgar Pty Ltd c1969:7).

On the ground floor, the entrance to the residences and underground car park were accessed from Spring Street, while the offices were accessed from an entrance on Little Collins Street. The offices and commercial spaces were numbered 1-15 Little Collins Street.

The offices on the first to fourth floors featured simple open workspaces measuring 73.6 by 129.8 feet, surrounding a central service core of lifts, stairs and toilets.

During the development phase, the property was known as '93-101 Spring Street'. The name Treasury Gate first appeared in the newspapers from the mid-1970s, and mostly referred to the office spaces (*Age* 11 December 1975:31).

Initially priced at \$100,000, some of the apartments remained unsold for years, and subsequently the selling price of the north-facing middle-level flats dropped to around \$70,000. However, the inner-city housing market rapidly grew during the following decades. In 1988, a typical fifteenth floor apartment was expected to yield a resale price nearing \$1 million, when a higher-quality apartment of a similar size in Toorak were being sold for around \$800,000 (*Age* 12 July 1988:21).

The building at 93-101 Spring Street was home to some prestigious individuals, including Robert Holmes a Court, Australia's first billionaire, who owned the roof penthouse; Sir Rupert and Lady Kathleen Clarke, who owned an apartment on the fifteenth floor; and Sir Ian and Lady Potter, who owned a double-size and extensively terraced apartment on the lower levels (*Age* 12 July 1988:21).

#### *Moore & Hammond, architects*

Within a few years after the establishment of his sole practice in the mid-1950s, David Moore (1928-1983) elevated one of his staff, Theodore Hammond (1929-2006), into partnership. Moore & Hammond remained in practice until 1974, when each of the two partners decided to pursue sole practice (Built Heritage n.d.).

Moore & Hammond became a limited liability company in 1967, and with its expertise in the design of high-rise apartment blocks, the practice became one of Melbourne's leading exponents of this typology. Moore & Hammond designed innumerable inner suburban examples, especially in Toorak and South Yarra. The 25-storey tower at 93-101 Spring Street completed in 1971 was one of the much-publicised projects of the partnership. The partnership dissolved a few years later in early 1974 (Built Heritage n.d.).

Moore remained in practice for another decade as the head of David Moore & Company, until his sudden death in 1983. Hammond continued practice under his own name, later merging with another firm to become Theo Hammond & Partners, Grant Heath & Wood. Hammond died in 2006 (Built Heritage n.d.).

#### **SITE DESCRIPTION**

This 28-storey building was designed as a combined office and residential complex. Built in two parts, the lower section (podium) has six storeys and is built to property boundaries. It was designed to provide retail accommodation at ground level with office spaces above. The upper section is comprised of a 19-storey residential tower which is set back from both street frontages. Three levels of carparking are located below the street and a plant room remains on top of the building.

Constructed of a reinforced concrete frame, the building is distinctly modernist in its form and aesthetic, and suggestive of the brutalist style in its deliberate expression of concrete and brick.

At ground level, shop fronts are recessed behind a colonnade of squared concrete columns that are on the Little Collins Street elevation. Much of the glazing is original, with some minor modifications

evident. A glazed entry foyer for the upper level apartments fronts Spring Street. Tiled steps rise from the street to the enclosed entry porch. The distinctive wide timber handrail and ribbed metal cladding are intact. A cantilevered canopy extends over the footpath. Entry to the offices and the carpark are located on the Spring Street elevation.

Above ground level, the podium is characterised by regular vertical banding, formed of bands of brown face brickwork separated by bands of bronze aluminium framed windows set over concrete spandrels. The whole arrangement is carefully designed with brickwork set onto precast concrete ledges across the face.

A horizontal concrete band runs across the top of the podium level and functions as a balustrade to an open terrace and recreational level for the apartment tower.

The tower is characterised by horizontal bands of exposed concrete that face Spring Street and function as balustrades for the open balconies at both edges of the building. Through the centre of the building, the concrete bands are incorporated into an enclosed section for each apartment, projecting slightly below bronze aluminium window sections and brown brick pillars at each level.

On either side of the building, windows are incorporated into the brown brick façade on the upper levels. Windows correspond with the arrangement of penthouse apartments and penthouses at the top of the building, designed to provide panoramic views across the park and the city at these levels.

A squared brown brick plant room sits at the top of the building and is detailed with a simple relief brickwork pattern.

## **INTEGRITY**

The building retains a high level of integrity. Alterations have occurred at the top penthouse apartment level where glazed panels have been inserted into the corner balcony sections. Some modifications have occurred to the shopfronts at ground level.

## **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

There are no residential towers from the postwar period in central Melbourne on the Heritage Overlay for the City of Melbourne. A group of four residential towers is included in this study. All are relatively intact examples of a new building type that emerged in the late postwar period (late 1960s – early 1970s).

### **Other Post-War Modernist residential buildings in the Hoddle Grid**

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 Treasury Gate. These are detailed below.



Park Tower, 199-207 Spring Street (Kurt Popper, 1969)  
(Interim HO1263)



Exhibition Towers, 287-293 Exhibition Street (Kenneth McDonald & Associates, 1969-71)



- Apartment Building, 13-15 Collins Street (Kurt Popper, 1970) (Interim HO1265, & currently included as a Significant place in Collins East Precinct HO504)

### Analysis

Like Treasury Gate, all three buildings were designed as modernist buildings with structural concrete frames supporting curtain walls of repetitive glazed elements and masonry spandrels. In each case, primary aesthetic interest is derived from the expression of structure and materials (brick, concrete, glass) and the arrangement of structural elements (windows, balconies). There is a consistency to the arrangement of levels between all four buildings with retail/commercial spaces provided at podium level.

Treasury Gate compares favourably with the other examples of residential apartment buildings. It is a highly intact example of the type demonstrating key characteristics including a modern form and

aesthetic, and provision of high-class residential accommodation in the city. The building has a number of notable features including the external detailing of the podium style base, the colonnade along Little Collins Street, the intact modernist entry foyer, and the finely detailed façade.

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**ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA**


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- |   |  |
|---|--|
| ✓ | <p><b>CRITERION A</b><br/>Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).</p>  |
|   | <p><b>CRITERION B</b><br/>Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).</p>   |
|   | <p><b>CRITERION C</b><br/>Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).</p>   |
| ✓ | <p><b>CRITERION D</b><br/>Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).</p>   |
| ✓ | <p><b>CRITERION E</b><br/>Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).</p>  |
|   | <p><b>CRITERION F</b><br/>Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)</p>   |
|   | <p><b>CRITERION G</b><br/>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><b>CRITERION H</b><br/>Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).</p>  |
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**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*

Age, as cited.

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**PREVIOUS STUDIES**

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**Central Activities District  
Conservation Study 1985** Ungraded

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 1993** Ungraded

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

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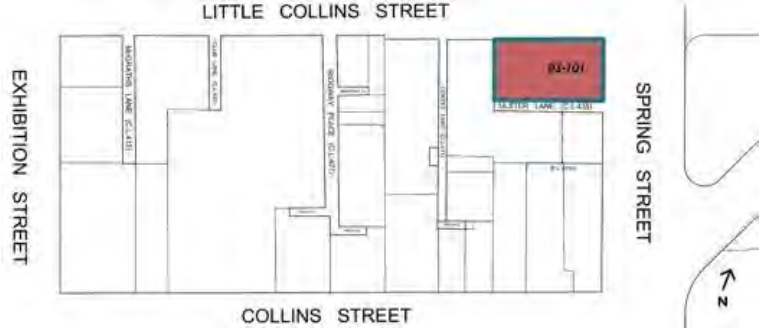
**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011** Ungraded

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### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Treasury Gate

PS ref no: HO1262XXXX



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### What is significant?

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Treasury Gate at 93-101 Spring Street, Melbourne, built in 1971 to a design by architectural firm Moore and Hamond Pty Ltd.

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 are not significant.

### How it is significant?

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Treasury Gate at 93-101 Spring Street, Melbourne is of local historical, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

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Treasury Gate is historically significant as one of the first wave of high-rise residential apartments constructed in the Melbourne CBD from the late 1960s, and before the introduction of a Victorian government policy in 1971 that directed where growth in Melbourne's housing supply could take place. (Criterion A)

Treasury Gate is a notable example of a new building typology that emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s – the modern high-rise residential apartment building. Treasury Gate is also notable for its mixed-use typology with offices, retail and residential situated at different levels in the same building. A podium built to the property boundaries at the lower levels also accommodates a colonnade with retail spaces at ground level, six levels of offices above, and a recessed tower section with luxury residential living. 93-101 Spring Street is also notable for its high level of integrity. (Criterion D)

Treasury Gate is aesthetically significant for its demonstration of modernism in mixed use apartment design. A notable attribute is the generous distribution of space for ground floor retail behind a colonnade on Little Collins Street. Aesthetically 93-101 Spring Street is significant for its composition and articulation of the various functions of retail, office and residential within a unifying material palette of face brickwork and concrete. Intact architectural detail extends to the distinctive wide timber handrail, ribbed metal cladding, bronze-coloured aluminium glazing frames and a cantilevered canopy. (Criterion E)

### Primary source

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



<b>SITE NAME</b>	Park Tower
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	199-207 Spring Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	108989



<b>SURVEY DATE:</b>	November 2017	<b>SURVEY BY:</b>	Context
<b>HERITAGE INVENTORY</b>	N/A	<b>EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY</b>	No
<b>PLACE TYPE</b>	Individual Heritage Place	<b>PROPOSED CATEGORY</b>	Significant
		<b>FORMER GRADE</b>	Ungraded
<b>DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:</b>	Kurt Popper	<b>BUILDER:</b>	Notkin Constructions Pty Ltd
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	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
5 Living in the city centre	5.1 Housing and lodging

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Not able to be determined
1920s	Factories and workshops
1960s	Residential, car parks

## 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

Designed by émigré architect Kurt Popper in 1969, this modern residential apartment building is an early example of this building type that emerged in Melbourne in the late 1960s/early 1970s. It is distinctly modernist in form and aesthetic, with a curtain walled façade that features an abstract arrangement of brick spandrels and masonry balconies.

## 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).

### **Overseas influences**

America was the strongest overseas influence on the post-World War II architecture of Australian capitals. Australian architects often studied in American universities or visited the USA on study tours. American advances in the manufacturing of steel and concrete were also adopted in Australia. While



steel was the main material in North American skyscrapers, concrete was used more often in Australia, and often combined with high-strength steel (Marsden 2000:70-72).

Another influence on architectural design was émigré architects who arrived in Melbourne before and after World War II. The impact of postwar immigration on Australian cities can be described in three ways: the enlivening of city centres by the arrival of European and Asian immigrants into mainly Australian-born communities; the rapid increase in the size of capital cities; and the roles played by particular immigrant groups, especially in the fields of architecture, economics, politics and cultural activities (Marsden 2000:95-99). Architect Kurt Popper, who arrived in Melbourne from Vienna in 1940, developers Bruno and Rino Grollo (sons of an Italian immigrant), and Viennese immigrant Ted Lustig and his Israeli son-in-law Max Moar, have had a significant impact on Melbourne's city landscape through architecture and property development.

Émigré architects were often educated in progressive institutions where modernism was more advanced than in Australia. Their expertise and modernist designs gained recognition and were translated into the local context. Many were also involved with teaching at architectural schools and influenced the next generation of architects (Lozanovska & McKnight 2015:352-353). Examples in the city centre include the apartment buildings, Park Tower, 199-207 Spring Street (1969) and 13-15 Collins Street (1970), both designed by Kurt Popper.

### **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 site at 199-207 Spring Street was part of the Crown Allotment 10, Section 24, purchased by D Dunbar. In 1895, four shops were present on the site, numbered 199 to 207, and in 1942, the shops housed R B Hallett, builder (no. 199), E S Wilson, sign writer (no. 201), a Chinese laundry (no. 203) and G W Rowley Pty Ltd, wire workers (no. 205-207) (MMBW Detailed Plan no 1014; S&Mc 1942). Businesses were still trading in the above premises in early 1968 (*Age* 16 February 1968:20; 17 April 1967:19).

In January 1969, a plan for a new residential tower in Spring Street was publicised. With an estimated building cost of \$2.5 million, the project group Two-O-One Pty Ltd appointed European émigré architect Kurt Popper, who specialised in apartment designs, and Notkin Constructions Pty Ltd, builders, for the construction of a 20-storey apartment block named 'Park Tower'.

While Popper had designed the six-storey 'Crossley House' (1967), which is known as the first modern residential block in Melbourne, Park Tower, as Melbourne's first high-rise strata title property, was a pioneering work (*Age* 29 January 1969:24).

The building's central heating and cooling system was ground breaking. The Gas and Fuel Corporation of Victoria designed an experimental gas system for Park Tower, which was widely applied to commercial and industrial buildings (*Age* 29 January 1969:24). The new system involved the Corporation in installing a 6500 feet network of insulated pipes and ducts that were used for continuous water circulation controlled by roof units. Each apartment was individually billed according to the usage recorded on a linked meter, a common feature of 'own-your-own' flats already established in the inner suburbs (*Age* 29 January 1969:24; Heritage Alliance 2008:21).

The original building design of 199-207 Spring Street incorporated 76 strata title properties including six luxury penthouses, two- to three- bedroom units, and some one-bedroom suites. Two levels of car parking for more than 60 cars were provided in the basement, with access from Little Bourke Street. Popper, included communal features such as a garden plaza with a fountain and a guest lounge that could be booked for parties on the ground floor, a spiral staircase, and a laundry room. The residents were serviced by live-in caretakers and protected by an electronic security system (*Age* 29 January 1969:24; 25 March 1983:27).

Park Tower was set back 24 feet from the road, with the two lowest levels projecting in line with neighbouring buildings (Figure 1, Figure 2) (*Age* 29 January 1969:34). A restaurant, 'Nellies', was opened on the ground floor by February 1971 (*Age* 13 February 1971:10).



Figure 1. Architect's drawing published in the *Age* in 1969 (Source: *Age* 29 January 1969:24).



Figure 2. Park Tower soon after completion (Source: Edquist 2002: 19)

Completed in 1969, Park Tower was promoted as an inner city 'town house', an idea imported from overseas countries such as the United Kingdom, with the building described as an 'ideal central dwelling for people with homes in remote areas' (*Age* 19 June 1970:22). At the time of the property release, the selling agents, Jones, Lang, Wootton & Baillieu Allard Real Estate Pty Ltd, were highly optimistic about property sales. The Park Tower apartments, however, were slow to sell in the early years, with only 25 per cent of 76 units sold within the first 13 months of opening (*Age* 29 January 1969:24; 17 February 1971:12).

By the 1980s, however Park Tower's accommodation was considered fashionable. A typical apartment unit with views overlooking Treasury Gardens to the east and Gordon House to the west was priced at \$85,000 in 1983, and was selling for \$127,500 in 1991 (*Age* 25 March 1983:27; 6 July 1991:31).

Today, Park Tower continues to accommodate residents in 77 units. It also contains one business, one shop and two food and drink outlets (CoMMaps).

### SITE DESCRIPTION

This 20-storey residential building has a two-storey base/podium built to the property boundary with a 16-storey tower set back from the street and two levels of basement carparking. The building is distinctively modernist in its form and aesthetic and is a representative example of a new building type - the modern residential tower building - that occurred in Melbourne in the late 1960s/early 1970s.

At ground level, the podium has glazed shop fronts and an (altered) cantilevered flat canopy that extends over the footpath. On the first floor, an outdoor terrace sits below a curved roofline with circular skylights, and was designed as a communal entertaining space for residents. Residential apartments are located in the tower section of the building.

The building is constructed with a concrete structural frame with curtain walls to the long edges. The front façade is divided into a grid pattern determined by the intersection of vertical and horizontal bays. Seven equal vertical bays are separated by structural elements clad in brown brick. Horizontal bays respond directly to the arrangement of floor plates. Regular panels of aluminium framed

windows, and masonry spandrels and balconies sit within the vertical bands. Open balconies are integrated into the façade and arranged in an abstract pattern for visual interest. This sophisticated composition is characteristic of the work of Kurt Popper.

The arrangement differs at the top three levels (which likely correspond with the penthouse apartments). Masonry spandrels run the full width of the building, with some sections glazed and others left open to form balconies. Alterations have occurred at this part of the building with some open balconies retrofitted with glazing.

The side walls of the building are clad in brown brick. The solid monumental appearance of the tall brick face is punctuated by a rendered panel down the centre of the wall. Small side windows for the building are incorporated into the rendered panel.

At the southern end of the podium, the brick edge wall extends vertically for one level and displays a metal art object.

## INTEGRITY

The building retains a high level of integrity. The cantilevered flat canopy at ground level has been altered. At the top three levels, open balconies have now been enclosed with glazing.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

There are no residential towers from the post war period on the Heritage Overlay for the City of Melbourne. A group of four residential towers is included in this study. All are relatively intact examples of a new building type that emerged in the late post war period (late 1960s – early 1970s).

### Other Post-War Modernist residential buildings in the Hoddle Grid

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 Park Tower. These are detailed below.



Apartment Building, 13-15 Collins Street (Kurt Popper, 1970)  
(Interim HO1265, & currently included as a Significant place  
in Collins East Precinct HO504)



Exhibition Towers, 287-293 Exhibition Street (Kenneth  
McDonald & Associates, 1969-71)



- Treasury Gate, 93-101 Spring Street (Moore & Hammond, 1971) (Interim HO1262)

### **Analysis**

Both 199-207 Spring Street (1969) and 13-15 Collins Street (1970) were designed by émigré architect Kurt Popper who was known for his apartment building designs.

Like Park Tower, all three buildings were designed as modernist buildings, with structural concrete frames supporting curtain walls of repetitive glazed elements and masonry spandrels. In each case, primary aesthetic interest is derived from the expression of structure and materials (brick, concrete, glass) and the arrangement of structural elements (windows, balconies). There is a consistency to the arrangement of levels between all four buildings with retail/commercial spaces provided at podium level and multiple floors of apartments in a tower arrangement. Both 93-101 Spring Street and 199-207 Spring Street have a common space for apartment residents located at a mid-level.

**ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA**

✓	<p><b>CRITERION A</b> Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).</p>
	<p><b>CRITERION B</b> Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).</p>
	<p><b>CRITERION C</b> Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).</p>
✓	<p><b>CRITERION D</b> Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).</p>
✓	<p><b>CRITERION E</b> Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).</p>
✓	<p><b>CRITERION F</b> Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)</p>
	<p><b>CRITERION G</b> 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><b>CRITERION H</b> 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*

Age, as cited.

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Tsutsumi, Jun and O'Connor, Kevin 2006, 'Time series analysis of the skyline and employment changes in the CBD of Melbourne', *Applied GIS Vol 2 No 2:8.1–8.12*. DOI:10.2104/ag060008.



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**PREVIOUS STUDIES**

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**Central Activities District  
Conservation Study 1985** Ungraded

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**Central City Heritage  
Study Review 1993** Ungraded

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

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011** Ungraded

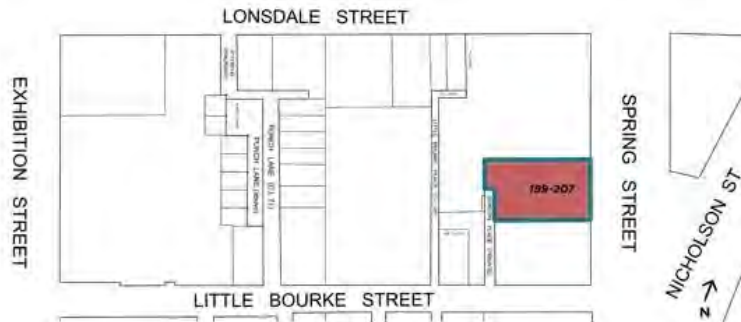
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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### Heritage Place: Park Tower



PS ref no: HO1263XXXX



### What is significant?

Park Tower, 199-207 Spring Street, Melbourne, built in 1969 to a design by émigré architect Kurt Popper.

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 are not significant.

### How it is significant?

Park Tower at 199-207 Spring Street is of local historic, representative, aesthetic and technical significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

Park Tower is historically significant as one of the first wave of high-rise residential apartments constructed in the Melbourne CBD from the late 1960s, and before the introduction of a Victorian

government policy in 1971 that directed where growth in Melbourne's housing supply could take place. (Criterion A)

Park Tower is a notable and early example of a new building typology that emerged in the CBD in the late 1960s and early 1970s – the modern high-rise residential apartment building. The building demonstrates key characters of the type. It was constructed as a modern curtain walled building, with a podium at the lower level accommodating communal, retail and commercial spaces, and luxury residential apartments located in a recessed tower section. The distinctive modern character of the building and the deliberate promotion of it as a base for a glamorous modern lifestyle are characteristics of the type, which contributes to the understanding of Melbourne as a modern city in the postwar period. (Criterion D)

Park Tower is aesthetically significant for its demonstration of modernism in apartment design. Attributes of the apartment block include a generous distribution of space for ground floor retail and a first-floor communal terrace with a sweeping curved roofline, above which is the 16-storey apartment tower. Aesthetic value is demonstrated by the combination of concrete structural frame combined with curtain walling to the long facades, forming a grid pattern. Within this regular grid, an abstract composition is achieved by the positioning of the open balconies that are integrated into the façade and visually contrasting with the sheer vertical side walls of brick. (Criterion E)

Park Tower is significant for the innovative central gas heating and cooling system that was installed in the building. Designed by the Gas and Fuel Corporation of Victoria, Park Towers was the first application of the system which was expected to have widespread usage in commercial and industrial buildings. The centrally installed system featured a high air-volume, low noise level fan and heat exchanger, as well as thermostat controls for personal comfort and billing metres to allow for recording of energy usage in each apartment. (Criterion F)

Park Tower is significant for its association with émigré architect Kurt Popper who brought European ideas about living in the city to the Melbourne CBD. Popper designed a number of residential apartment buildings in Melbourne including the six-storey 'Crossley House' (1967), which is known as the first modern residential block in Melbourne. (Criterion H)

### **Primary source**

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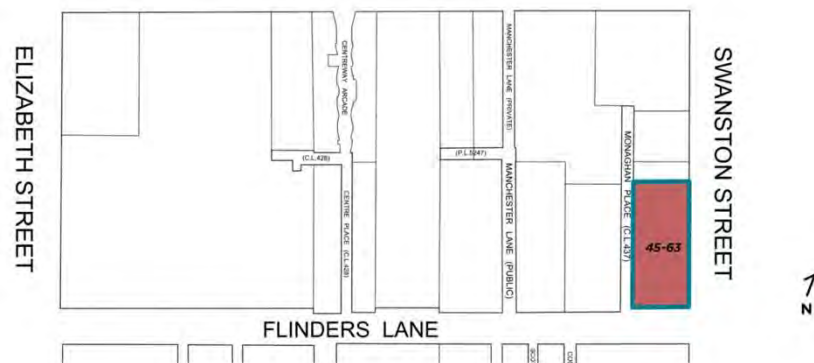
[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\)](#)~~Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)~~ (updated March 2022)



<b>SITE NAME</b>	Former State Savings Bank of Victoria
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	45-63 Swanston Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	109264



COLLINS STREET



SURVEY DATE: October 2019

SURVEY BY: GJM Heritage

HERITAGE INVENTORY: No

EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY: HO505

PLACE TYPE: Individual Heritage Place

PROPOSED CATEGORY: Significant

FORMER CATEGORY: Non-contributory

DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST: Buchan, Laird &amp; Buchan

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 Business and finance

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Hotel, Workshop, Retail, Merchant
1920s	Bank, Retail, Café/Restaurant, Club, Hairdresser, Merchant, Office, Workshop, Library, Medical, Caretaker
1960s	Bank, Retail, Café/Restaurant, Club, Office, Workshop/Manufacturing, Caretaker, Storage

## 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 multi-storey corner office building 45-63 Swanston Street was designed by architects and engineers Buchan, Laird & Buchan for the State Savings Bank of Victoria, Victoria's first established bank. The building was constructed c1974.

## 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 multi-storey corner office building 45-63 Swanston Street was designed by architects and engineers Buchan, Laird & Buchan for the State Savings Bank of Victoria, Victoria's first established bank.

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).

The State Savings Bank had occupied a building on the corner of Flinders Lane, at 45-51 Swanston Street, from 1923 (*Argus*, 12 Dec 1923:18). In the early 1970s, architects and engineers Buchan, Laird & Buchan were engaged to prepare designs for a new building on the site.

Architectural drawings dated April 1971 show the Swanston Street and Flinders Lane elevations and the original design of the shopfronts, and the ground floor layout with the banking chamber and retail space (Figure 1 - Figure 3). The City of Melbourne received a building permit application for a '14 storey office building' in October 1971 (total estimated value of \$2,000,000).

Rate books indicate that 45-63 Swanston Street, owned by the State Savings Bank of Victoria, remained land in 1974, while a photograph dated 1975 and aerial photograph dated 1976 show the completed building (Figure 4 & Figure 5).

### **Buchan Laird & Buchan, architects**

Laird & Buchan was founded in Geelong, Victoria, in 1890 by architect, Angus Laird. Following Laird's death in 1937, the practice became Buchan, Laird & Buchan, which was a partnership between Laird's son Ewen Laird, and father and son, Thomas Johnston Buchan and (Sir) John Buchan. One of the firm's early projects was the Pilkington's Glass Factory on Melbourne Road in Geelong (1936-37), which 'became an early icon of modernism in Australia' (Willis 2012:111).

Following World War II, John Buchan set up a Melbourne office in 1946. In the postwar period, the firm expanded, becoming involved in large-scale commercial and industrial projects including the Ford administration building, Broadmeadows (1964) and significant town planning and housing projects for the Housing Commission of Victoria. In the 1960s and 1970s, the firm gained particular prominence for its designs for office buildings. Notable works from this period include Shell House at the corner of William and Bourke streets (1960, since demolished; in collaboration with Skidmore Owings & Merrill); the former Stock Exchange House, Collins Street (1968), Nubrik House, 269-75 William Street (1972) and the State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street (c1974), all located in Melbourne.

The firm became Buchan, Laird & Bawden in 1982, and continues today as the Buchan Group, formed in 1990.

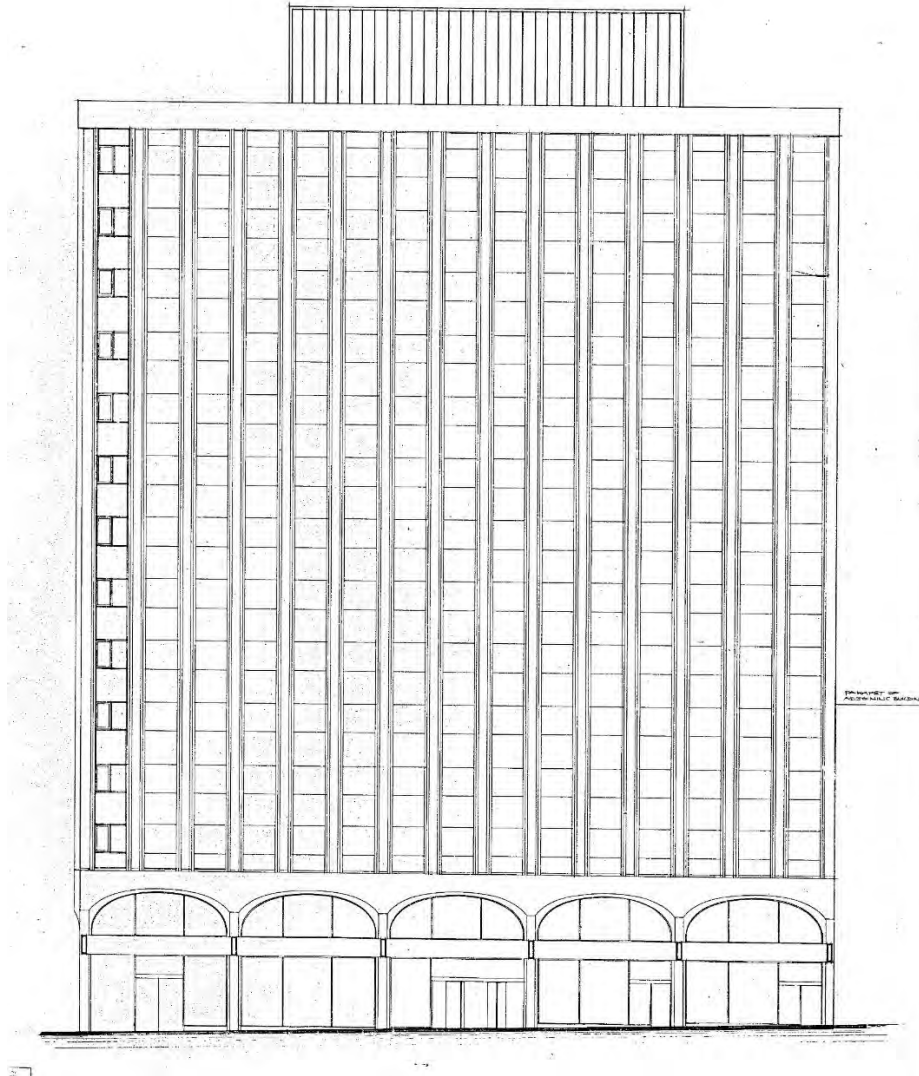


Figure 1. East elevation to Swanston Street. Drawing by Buchan, Laird & Buchan, dated April 1971 (BAP).

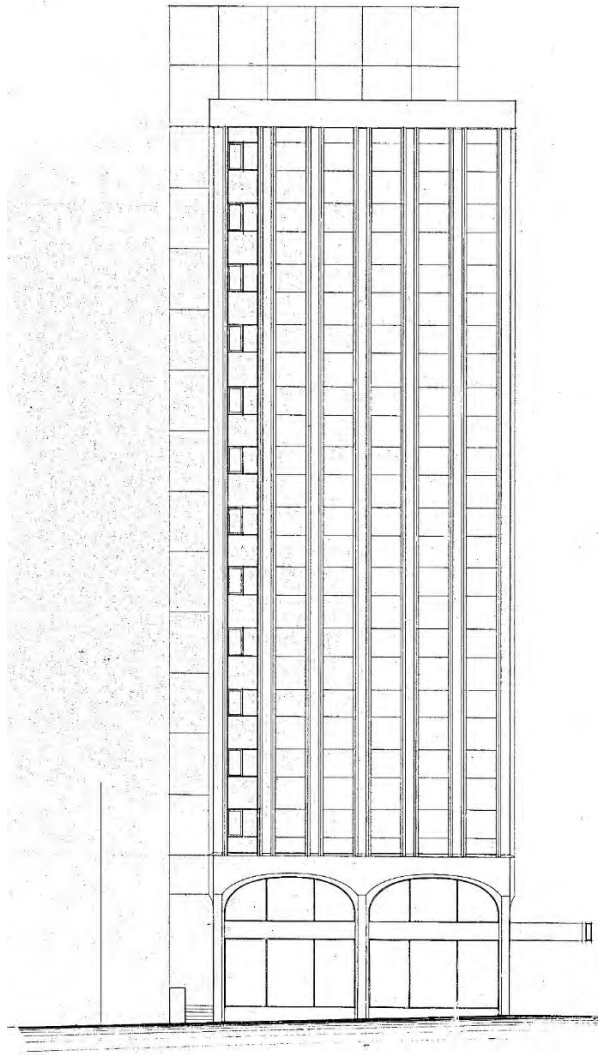


Figure 2. South elevation to Flinders Lane. Drawing by Buchan, Laird & Buchan, dated April 1971 (BAP).

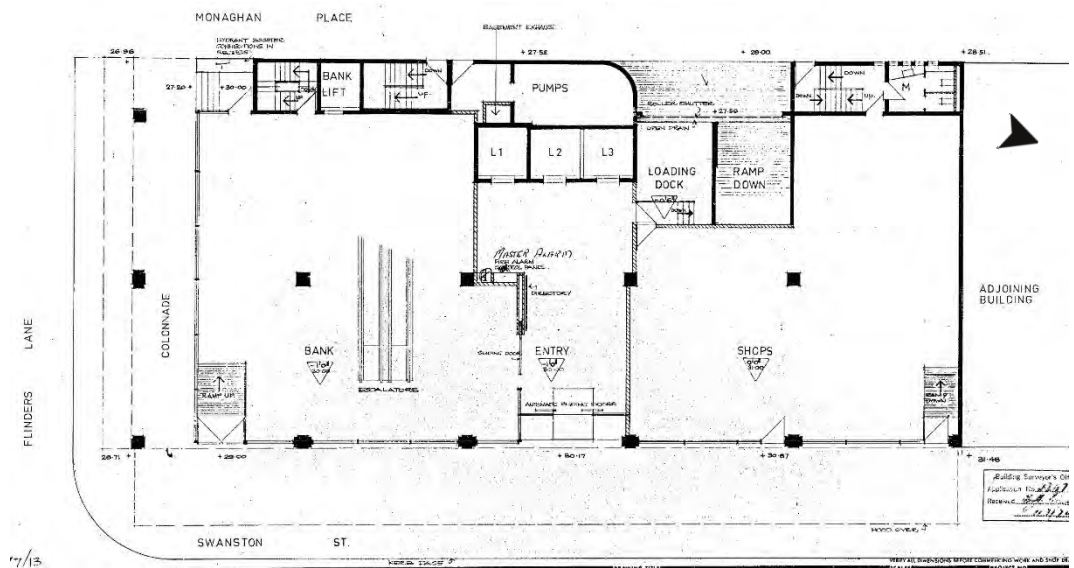


Figure 3. Ground floor plan. Drawing by Buchan, Laird & Buchan, dated April 1971 (BAP).



Figure 4. The newly completed State Savings Bank in 1975 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H2004.49/65).



Figure 5. Detail of a 1976 aerial, showing the present State Savings Bank (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H2003.100/977).



Figure 6. The building prior to recent alterations to the ground and first floors (no date) (CoMMaps)

### SITE DESCRIPTION

The Former State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street is a 13-storey commercial building located on the north-west corner of Swanston Street and Flinders Lane. The building has main frontages to both Swanston Street and Flinders Lane and a secondary frontage to Monaghan Lane, which forms the western boundary of the site and provides access to a basement carpark. Constructed in c1974 to a design by Buchan Laird & Buchan, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

The rectangular building is of reinforced concrete column and slab construction and sits on a double-height, rendered podium base. The upper walls of the main east and south facades are grid-like with a dominant vertical accent created by precast concrete structural mullions which rise from the podium base to a plain crowning parapet. These mullions are formed from stacked angled elements with curved inner faces which frame recessed rows of paired aluminium framed windows and glass spandrels.

The double-storey rendered concrete podium base is highly distinctive with an arcaded colonnade of segmental arches to Swanston Street and Flinders Lane. Coved in profile and glazed, the arches rise above a cantilevered awning to Swanston Street and fascia to Flinders Lane. These are broad elements that mask the first-floor concrete building slab and provide a strong horizontality to the base of the building. In a similar manner, a plain parapet fascia provides a strong horizontal capping to the vertical mullions of the facades.

At street level a deep awning cantilevers over the footpath in Swanston Street and the line of this continues as a fascia to the Flinders Lane façade. This fascia has been recently reclad and shopfronts have been extended to the building line in Flinders Lane. The Swanston Street awning has

been modified to enable open café use at first floor level and a simple bracketed canopy inserted above.

## **INTEGRITY**

The Former State Savings Bank of Victoria, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building above street level, remains highly intact to its original c1974 construction. 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 Former State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston 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, with the dominant verticality of precast concrete structural mullions dividing rows of aluminium-framed glazing and glass spandrels, and the highly distinctive arcaded podium base, can be clearly observed from Swanston Street and Flinders Lane. Despite some modifications made to the building at street level, the upper facades of the Former State Savings Bank of Victoria 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 State Savings Bank of Victoria 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).

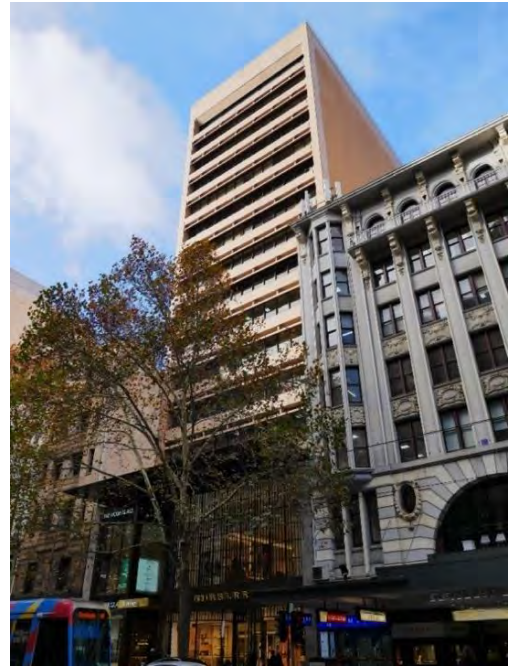
### **Locally-significant places**

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 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).



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.

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 Kolve, 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)



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

### Analysis

As a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building, the Former State Savings Bank of Victoria building at 45-63 Swanston 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><b>CRITERION A</b> Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).</p>
	<p><b>CRITERION B</b> Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).</p>
	<p><b>CRITERION C</b> Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).</p>
✓	<p><b>CRITERION D</b> Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).</p>
	<p><b>CRITERION E</b> Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).</p>
	<p><b>CRITERION F</b> Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)</p>
	<p><b>CRITERION G</b> 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><b>CRITERION H</b> 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 Photos.

City of Melbourne Rate Books (RB), Batman Ward, VPRS 5708, P9, Vol 150 (1974), entry 122.

Museum Victoria Collections, Item numbers and photographers as cited.

Sands & McDougall Directories (S&Mc).

State Library of Victoria (SLV), picture collection, images and photographers as cited.

*The Argus*.

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

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**PREVIOUS STUDIES**

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**Central Activities District  
Conservation Study 1985** Ungraded

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 1993** Ungraded

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

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011** Ungraded

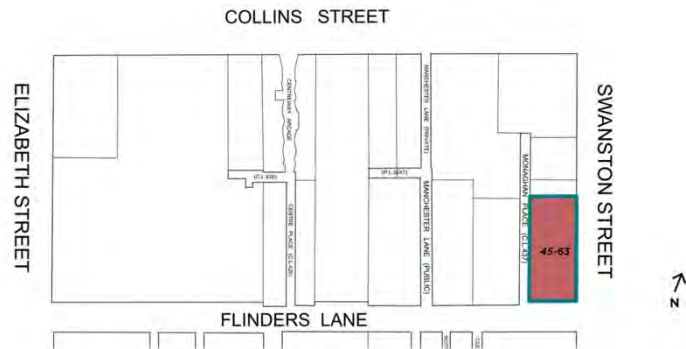
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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Former State Savings Bank of Victoria



**PS ref no:** HO1375XXXX



### What is significant?

The Former State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street, a multi-storey commercial building constructed in 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.

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**How it is significant?**

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The Former State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

**Why it is significant?**

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Constructed c1974, to a design by Buchan, Laird & Buchan, the Former State Savings Bank of Victoria 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 State Savings Bank of Victoria 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 13-storey structure, the Former State Savings Bank of Victoria clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a postwar commercial building, including a heavy arcaded podium base and two grid-like walls with vertical accent, formed from dominant precast concrete structural mullions which divide rows of glazing and glass spandrels, as well as the use of materials such as precast concrete panels, aluminium window frames and opaque glass. These demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style (Criterion D).

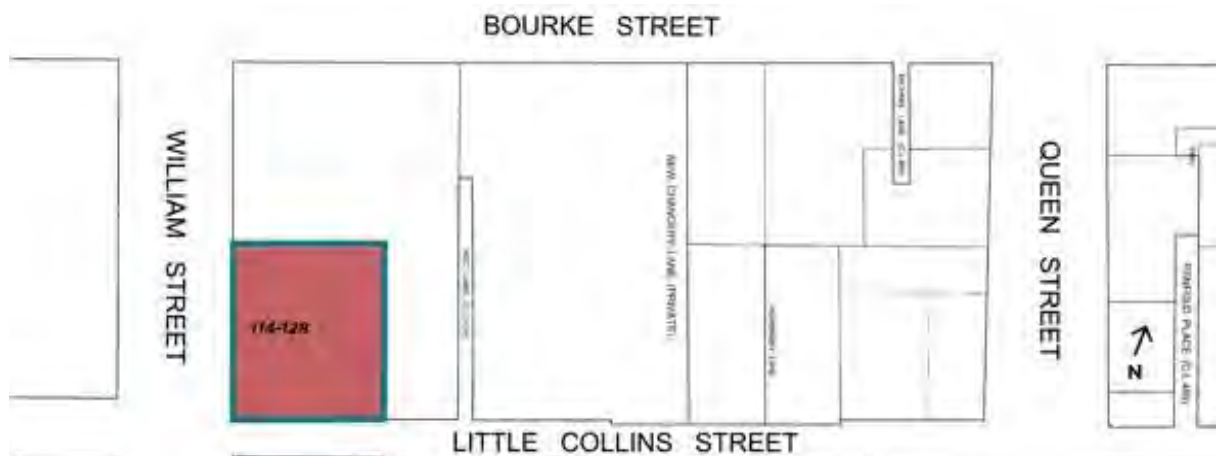
**Primary source**

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



<b>SITE NAME</b>	Former Dillingham Estates House
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	114-128 William Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	110147



**SURVEY DATE:** May 2017

**SURVEY BY:** Context

**HERITAGE INVENTORY** NA

**EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY** Yes – interim controls HO1180

**PLACE TYPE** Individual Heritage Place

**PROPOSED CATEGORY** Significant

**DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:** Yuncken Freeman

**FORMER GRADE** B  
**BUILDER:** Not known

**DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:** Postwar Period (1945-1965)

**DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:** 1975-76

## 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	Four buildings including the Legal Club Hotel and the Union Buildings
1920s	As above
1960s	As above

## 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 Dillingham Estates House is a highly significant example of a late modern office tower and of the work of highly influential modernist architects Yuncken Freeman who played a major role in re-shaping the city in the 1960s and 70s.



## 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 Dillingham Estates House is located was amalgamated from four land parcels which were occupied by buildings throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century. Buildings on the site included the Legal Club Hotel and the Union Buildings (MMBW map).

Dillingham Corporation of Australia Ltd. was a group of companies involved in building construction, engineering, dredging, ship building, mining, real estate, property development, earth moving, road building, quarrying and cattle stations. This building and the neighbouring BHP House were products of the 1960s and 1970s mineral and energy boom of the time.

New office buildings in the 'glass box' tradition continued to appear in the city well into the 1970s, typified by Dillingham Estates House at 114-128 William Street completed in 1976. As with the visually similar and highly significant Eagle Star Insurance Co. Ltd. building (1971) in Bourke Street, Yuncken Freeman Architects Pty Ltd were the designers of 114-128 William Street. The partner in charge was Barry Patten and the design architect, Llew Morgan. The building, titled then as

Dillingham Estates House, was photographed near completion in 1975 by the eminent photographer, Wolfgang Sievers.

*Yuncken Freeman, architect*

In the 1960s Melbourne based Yuncken Freeman was one of the largest architectural practices in Australia, with a reputation for modernism, 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 architects during the 1960s and 70s, designing many award-winning office buildings in the city. These included Eagle House 473 Bourke Street, in 1971, (VHR1807, HO901) and the BHP tower, 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 that had prevailed over the architecture of their contemporaries in Melbourne and Sydney. The firm continued until the late 1980s, completing work for Melbourne University, amongst many large institutional and corporate clients (Goad & Willis eds., 2012:781-2).



Figure 1. Estates House in 1976. (Source: Sievers 1976, SLV H99.50/129 [copyright](#)).

## SITE DESCRIPTION

The former Dillingham Estates House is set within a paved and landscaped plaza that is shared with its neighbour, BHP House. A six-level parking block to the east is in a related minimalist style while a ramp leads to basement parking under the building itself.

The former Dillingham Estates House has a central service core, thereby maximising the extent of full height glass windows on all four façades. This placement allowed full expression of the commercial glass box, however, unlike its 1950s predecessors (such as 100 Collins Street), the structure is not revealed except as implied by the modular aluminium panels. The aluminium and glass surfaces, appear visually as one gleaming plane. There is no reference to a traditional window as a framed wall opening except for the chair rail. The façade presents the impression of a structural grid rather than the transparent façade of the 1950s that reveals the structure behind.

Unlike the naturally ventilated early 1950s glass boxes, the former Dillingham Estates House employs a service chamber above the ceiling housing air-conditioning ducts. This chamber is reflected on the external elevation as horizontal bands of aluminium. Fire separation was also achieved in a novel manner allowing a greater area of glazing.

Although the former Dillingham Estates House is superficially like Eagle House at 473 Bourke Street (VHR H1807, HO901), it also has the advantage of a free-standing site that displays fully the glass and aluminium skin wrapped on a simple rectangular shaft.

## INTEGRITY

The former Dillingham Estates House is largely intact and is a fine example from a distinct and valuable body of work within the postwar commercial architectural idiom. The ground floor interior has changed with minor external additions and corporate signage.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The former Dillingham Estates House belongs to a group of 1960s-70s office towers and is part of a substantial body of work undertaken by Yuncken Freeman. Their 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. This has been recognised by numerous architectural awards won by the practice.

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 Dillingham Estates 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 HO1 Flinders Gate Precinct (Non-contributory).



Wales Corner, 221-231 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turn 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)



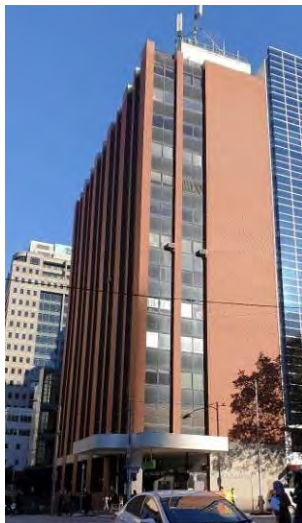
Office Building, 178-188 William Street (McIntyre  
McIntyre & Partners, 1972-72)



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 Dillingham Estates House is comparable with the earlier Eagle House and BHP House. These two buildings show a culmination of architectural design work by Yuncken Freeman from their early curtain wall buildings like Norwich Union Insurance building and the concrete frames of the Royal Insurance Building and 1 Macarthur Place. BHP House stands alone amongst postwar office towers for its innovative use of steel technology externally expressed. Eagle House and the former Dillingham Estates House display a highly refined glass and aluminium curtain wall

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**ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA**


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

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

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

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

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

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

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**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).

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

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**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*

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.

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

Sievers, Wolfgang 1967, 'Estates House, 120 William Street, Melbourne and surrounds', State Library of Victoria: Wolfgang Sievers collection, accessed online June 2019.

Storey, Rohan 2008, 'Skyscrapers', *eMelbourne*, School of Historical & Philosophical Studies, The University of Melbourne, <http://www.emelbourne.net.au>, accessed 12 April 2018.

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*

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.

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

### *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*

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



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**PREVIOUS STUDIES**

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**Central Activities District  
Conservation Study 1985** C

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 1993** C

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

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011** B

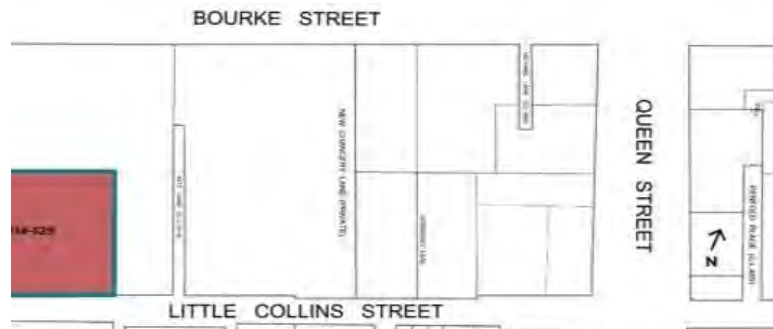
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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Former  
Dillingham Estates House



**PS ref no:** HO1180XXXX



### What is significant?

The former Dillingham Estates House, later Estates House, at 114-128 William Street, Melbourne, completed in 1976 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.

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**How it is significant?**

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The former Dillingham Estates House at 114-128 William Street is of historical, representative, aesthetic and technical significance to the City of Melbourne.

**Why it is significant?**

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The former Dillingham Estates House is historically significant for its association with the financial investment driven by the mineral and energy boom that fuelled office building in the city. It also demonstrates the lessening of the importance of British and American capital in favour of large Australian companies during the 1970s. (Criterion A)

The former Dillingham Estates House is a significant example of a late Post-War Modernist office tower and of the work of influential modernist architects Yuncken Freeman who played a significant role in re-shaping the city from the 1960s and 70s. Yuncken Freeman had an unequalled national reputation for superb architectural detailing and classically simple forms. The building is also part of a highly significant office group located around the corner of William and Bourke Streets and including BHP House and Eagle House, that was the precursor to the former Dillingham Estates House. (Criterion D)

The former Dillingham Estates House is aesthetically significant for its clarity of architectural expression and the sophistication of its curtain wall with windows set in aluminium clad panels on a strict module. (Criterion E)

The former Dillingham Estates House is technically significant for its design that achieved floor to ceiling glazing and fire separation between floors, as well as the central service core that allowed the cladding of the building to be expressed on all four sides. (Criterion F)

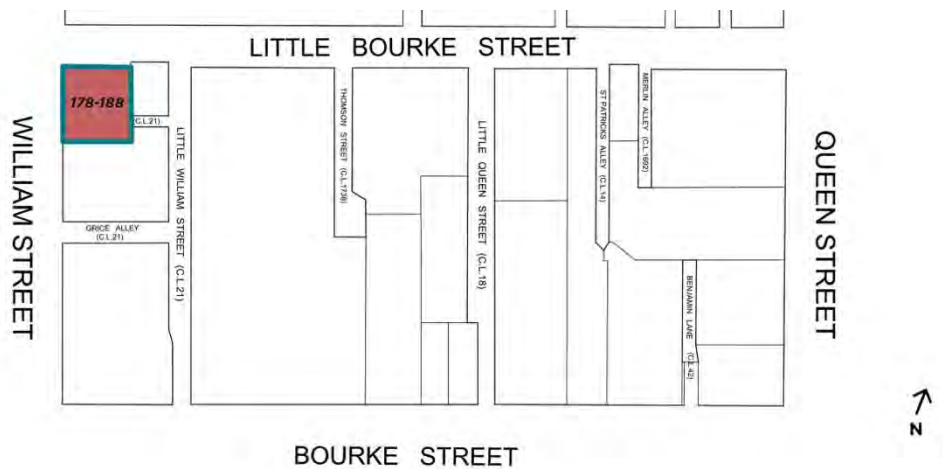
**Primary source**

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



<b>SITE NAME</b>	Office Building [also known as Prudential Building and Douglas Menzies Chambers (current name)] ( <a href="#">Not included in a Heritage Overlay – see Addendum in Volume 1</a> )
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	178-188 William Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	110144



<b>SURVEY DATE:</b>	October 2019	<b>SURVEY BY:</b>	GJM Heritage
<b>HERITAGE INVENTORY</b>	No	<b>EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY</b>	No
<b>PLACE TYPE</b>	Individual Heritage Place	<b>PROPOSED CATEGORY</b>	Significant
<b>DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:</b>	McIntyre McIntyre & Partners	<b>FORMER GRADE</b>	D
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	<b>BUILDER:</b>	Not known
		<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	1972-1973



## 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	Merchant, Hotel
1920s	Merchant, Hotel
1960s	Office, 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 multi-storey office building at 178-188 William Street was designed by architects McIntyre McIntyre & Partners for owners Costain Australia Ltd, an infrastructure and mining company, in what appears to have been a speculative development venture. Construction was completed in 1973. The building was sold to the Prudential Assurance Company Ltd soon after completion of construction (in 1974). The building has been regularly occupied by solicitors and barristers since 1974 and is today known as the Douglas Menzies Chambers.

## 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 multi-storey office building at 178-188 William Street was designed by architects McIntyre McIntyre & Partners for owners Costain Australia Ltd, a multi-national infrastructure and mining company. Construction was completed in 1973 (McIntyre; BAF; CoMMaps). The City of Melbourne received a building permit application for the building in June 1972, with an estimated project cost of \$1,038,000. The site was formerly occupied by the Four Courts Hotel and Oswald Burt & Co's building (BAI; BAF).

Architectural drawings dated 1972 show the principle elevations and ground floor plan (Figure 1 - Figure 3). Annotations to the architectural drawings indicate that the north and west elevations were constructed of precast concrete units, with aluminum-framed windows (BAP).

Price & Chamberlin, solicitors and barristers, occupied part of the building in 1974 until at least the early 1980s (Age, 23 Dec 1974:15; 2 Nov 1981:2; S&Mc). In September 1974, Costain sold the property to The Prudential Assurance Company Ltd (LV:V9056/F780). The building may have been called the Prudential Building during this period (Butler 1985:24).

In 1996, the building was launched as the Douglas Menzies Chambers, owned by Barristers' Chambers Limited who purchased the property in 1992 (BCL; LV:V9056/F780). The chambers were named after Sir Douglas Menzies (1907-1974), Australian High Court Justice.

### 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 such as at 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).

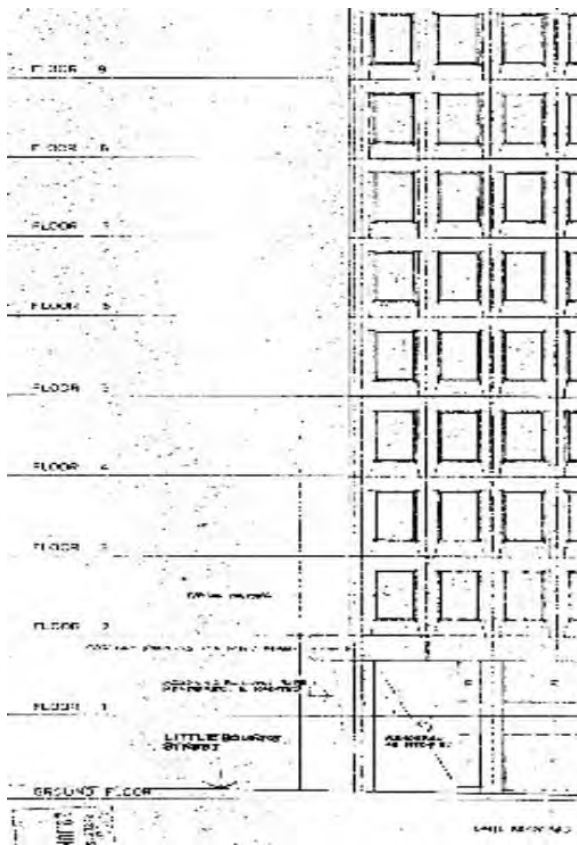


Figure 1. Architectural drawing of the west elevation, dated 1972 (BAP).

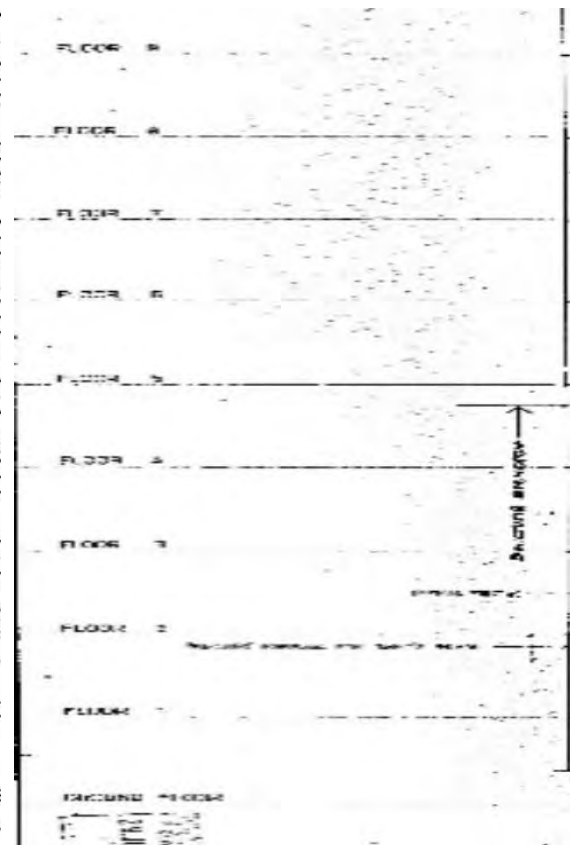


Figure 2. North elevation, drawing dated 1972 (BAP).

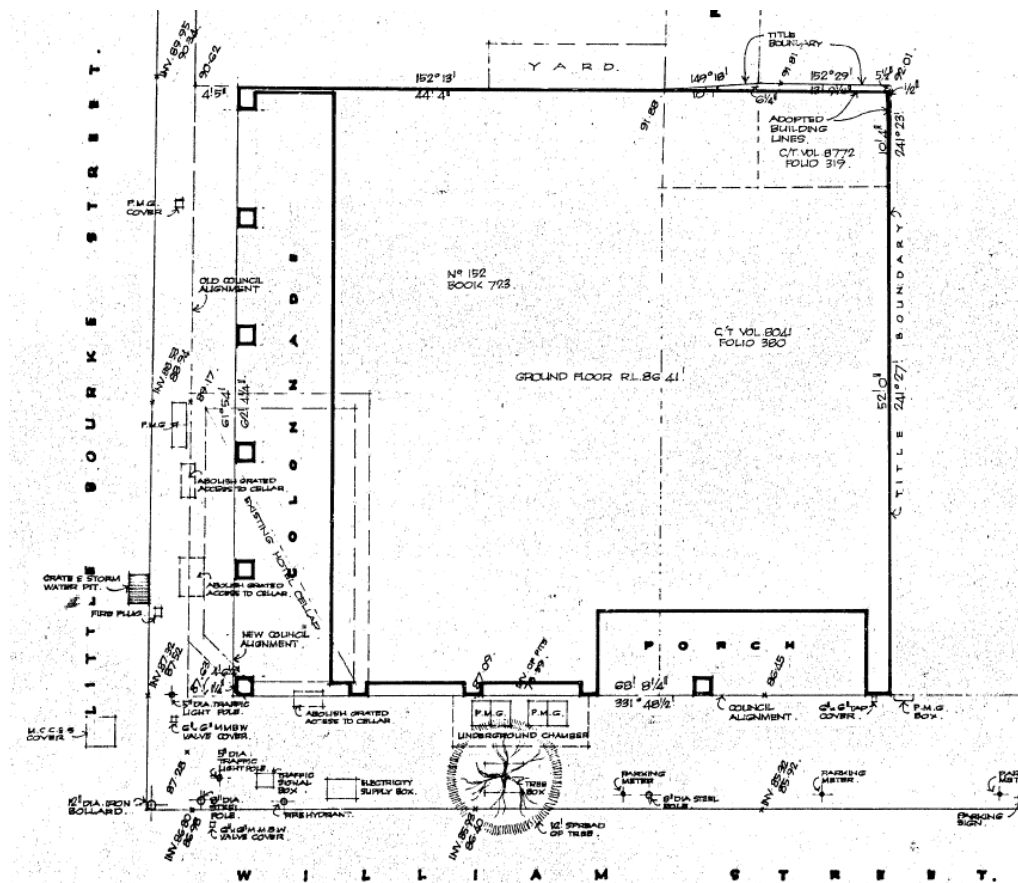


Figure 3. Site plan and ground floor plan, dated 1972 (BAP).

## SITE DESCRIPTION

The office building at 178-188 William Street is an 11-storey commercial building located at the north-west corner of William Street and Little Bourke Street, with frontages to both streets. Constructed in 1972-73 to a design by architects McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

Square in plan, the building is of reinforced concrete column and slab construction with hollow blockwork infill panels to the secondary south and east facades. A coloured cement render has been applied to these secondary facades. The main north and west facades are formed from precast concrete loadbearing panels, which support the concrete floor slabs from the first floor upwards. The precast panels, with sloped sills, provide a simple frame to fixed aluminium-framed windows and together these units form a highly repetitive grid-like pattern across the main facades. A plain concrete parapet crowns the building.

At street level, the north façade of the building is recessed to a depth of two bays behind a simple, double height colonnade formed from plain tall piers placed below each alternate precast panel. To the west, a southern entrance porch is similarly recessed but to a single height, with a row of office spaces across the upper level.

## INTEGRITY

The office building at 178-188 William Street, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building, remains very highly intact to its original 1972-73 construction.

Overall, the building retains a very high degree of architectural integrity to the Post-War Modernist style in fabric, form and detail. The building has undergone minimal external change and can be clearly understood and appreciated as a fine example of a Post-War Modernist multi-storey office building.

### **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

The office building at 178-188 William 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 building design. The building's two grid-like facades, formed from repetitive loadbearing precast concrete units with distinctive sloped sills that frame individual aluminium-framed windows across both prominent facades, can be clearly observed from William Street. 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 office building at 178-188 William 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, 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)

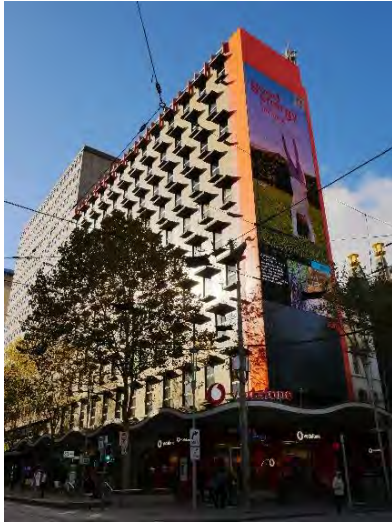


Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



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

As a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building, the building at 178-188 William 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.

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**ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA**


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

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**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).

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

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

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

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**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).

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

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**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*

Barristers' Chambers Limited (BCL), 'Douglas Menzies Chambers', <<https://www.bcl.net.au/chamber/douglas-menzies-chambers/>>, accessed 3 July 2019.

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Goad, Philip (2012), 'McIntyre, Peter & Dione' in Philip Goad & Julie Willis's (Eds.) (2012), *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Port Melbourne.

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*The Age*.

**PREVIOUS STUDIES**

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**Central Activities District  
Conservation Study 1985** D

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 1993** Ungraded

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

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011** Ungraded

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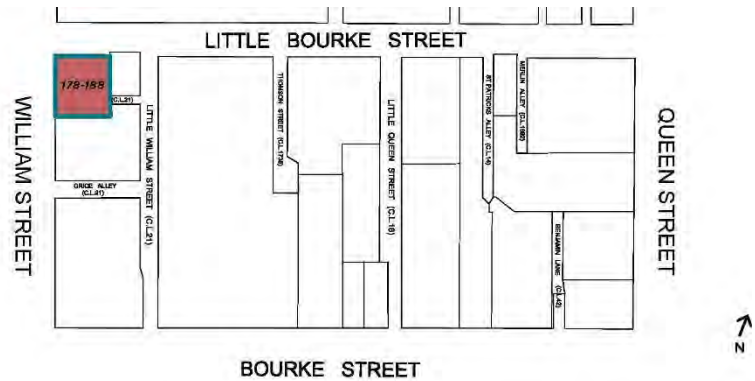


## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### Heritage Place: Office Building



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



### What is significant?

The office building at 178-188 William Street, a multi-storey office building constructed in 1972-73.

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 very high level of integrity to its original design.

### How it is significant?

The office building at 178-188 William Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

Constructed in 1972-73 to a design by McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, the office building at 178-188 William 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).

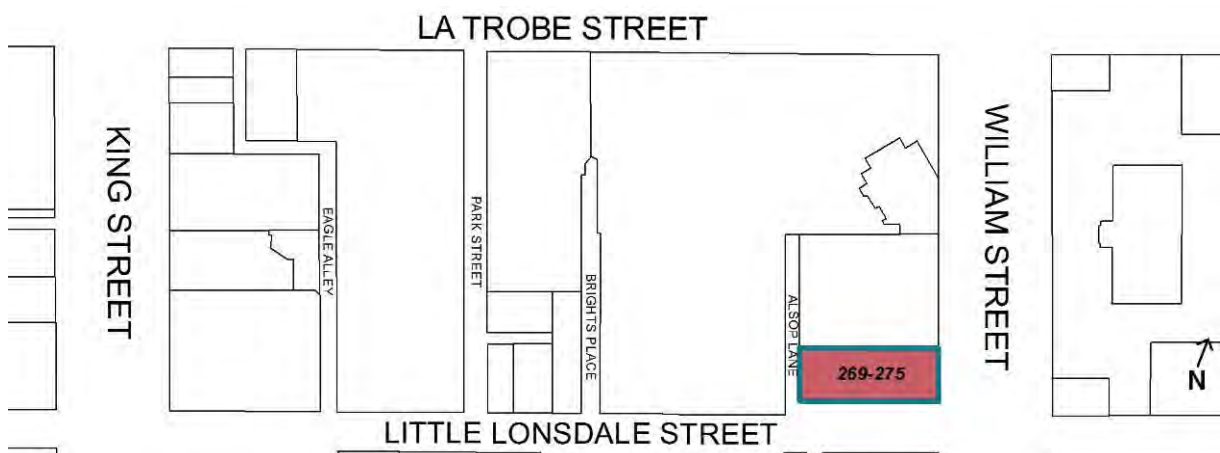
The office building at 178-188 William Street is a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building. The building strongly reflects the style which was popular in the 1960s to the mid 1970s, particularly in central Melbourne. The 11-storey building clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a later postwar structure, including two grid-like walls of repetitive loadbearing precast concrete units, with distinctive sloped sills, which frame individual windows, as well as the use of materials such as precast concrete panels. These demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style. The building remains very highly intact to clearly demonstrates the principle characteristics of a Post-War Modernist commercial high-rise building (Criterion D).

## Primary source

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

<b>SITE NAME</b>	Nubrik House
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	269-275 William Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	110107



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:**

Buchan, Laird &amp; Buchan

**BUILDER:**

A V Jennings Industries Australia Ltd

**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, 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
	1.10 Brutalism and brickwork
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Business and finance

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Residential
1920s	Residential, Manufacturing
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

Nubrik House, 269-275 William Street, was built in 1972 as a 13-storey office building. It opened in 1972 as the national headquarters for Brick & Pipe Industries Ltd. The building was named after the company's main brand, Nubrik. Brick & Pipe Industries occupied the first and second floors of the building until c1993, with other businesses occupying the offices on the remaining floors. A roof top apartment was added in 1997 making the building 14 storeys.

## 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 Kelle & 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).

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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 at 269-275 William Street is part of Crown Allotment 10, Section 31, purchased by J Whitehill Stevens in 1939 (CoMMaps).

In 1856, the site was used as a garden. By the 1890s, the site was occupied by a two-storey residence and its yard. The Victorian period residence remained through to the late 1960s, and was used as a boarding house, a hostel and then as the Queen Victoria Hospital's nurses' home (MMBW Detail Plan no 736, 1895; Mahlstedt Map section 2, no 2a, 1910 & 1923; S&Mc 1896, 1926, 1942, 1955 & 1960; Halla 1967). By 1923, a portion of the subject land adjoining Alsop Lane had been developed with a two-storey warehouse with a frontage to Little Lonsdale Street. Known as 440-442 Little Lonsdale Street, the warehouse was occupied from the 1920s to the 1960s by various manufacturing businesses including a motor garage, an electrical instrument maker, an artificial flower manufacturer, printers and a typewriter setter (S&Mc 1926, 1955 & 1965).

In May 1971 the subject site was acquired by Brick & Pipe Industries Ltd, Victoria's biggest brick manufacturer at the time (*Age* 2 May 1970:17; *Age* 9 May 1970:20). Named after the company's main brand, Nubrik, Nubrik House was constructed at 269-275 William Street as the new national headquarters for Brick & Pipe Industries Ltd in 1971-72 to a design by Buchan, Laird & Buchan. The builder was A V Jennings Industries Australia Ltd, and the engineering consultants were Lovell, Smith & Crisp (Buchan, Laird & Buchan 1971; *Age* 6 November 1972:24). Nubrik House officially opened on 18 December 1972 (*Age* 18 December 1972:13).

Brick & Pipe Industries Ltd was formed in July 1964 after Brick Industries Ltd (established in July 1959), changed the company name (delisted n.d.). By the early 1970s, Brick & Pipe Industries Ltd was one of Australia's biggest brick manufacturers (*Age* 24 July 1974:20). In October 1989, Brick & Pipe Industries Ltd was taken over by Arnsberg Pty Ltd, a subsidiary of the Goldberg Group, and was again sold to Pioneer International in 1990 (delisted n.d.; *Age* 18 April 1990:23; *Age* 26 February 1992:19). All divisions were merged into Pioneer Building Products by 1996, which was taken over by Brickworks Ltd in 2001. The Brick & Pipe Industries Ltd main brand, 'Nubrik', survives as a brand of Austral Bricks within the Brickworks Building Products Group (Austral Bricks 2019). Its main brick pit and factory was situated in Craigieburn Road, Wollert (some 25 kilometres north of Melbourne's CBD) (Bricks in Victoria 2013).

The 13-storey brick and concrete building featured a face brick exterior to all three exposed elevations, using bricks made by the company to showcase its products. Although the National Trust states that Nubrik House was Australia's tallest building of loadbearing brick construction at that time, and that the use of loadbearing brick was uncommon in the construction of the mid- to high-rise buildings in central Melbourne in the postwar period, further research reveals that the brick pier was a non-structural veneer (NT 2014:38, 52) (see Figure 1). According to the building plans, each unit of the brick piers is a combination of structural (internal) and non-structural (external) parts. Supporting the floor-by-floor load between two floor slabs, each internal brick pier interlinked with the external non-loadbearing brick veneer, which was supported on shelf angles tied to the floor slabs. (see ~~and~~ Figure 1 ~~and~~ Figure 2). Internally, reinforced concrete columns and beams were adopted to support the load (Buchan, Laird & Buchan 1971). More than 500,000 bricks were used in the construction of the subject building (*Age* 18 December 1972:13).

The internal masonry structures in the foyer and the office spaces on all levels above were exposed face brick, featuring bricks of varying colours and textures. The foyer was paved with brown tiles with



an antique finish. All bricks and tiles used were the company's own products (Age 18 December 1972:13).

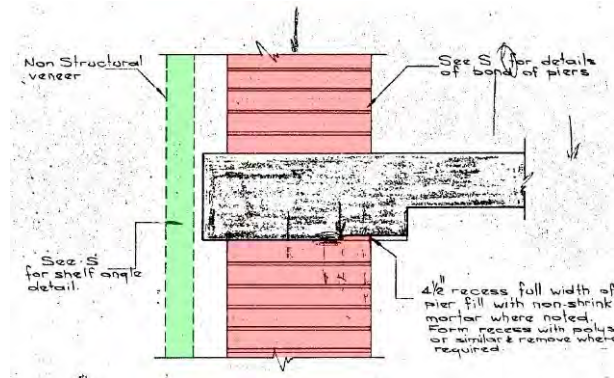


Figure 1. A vertical section showing the arrangement of the masonry and reinforced concrete slab. Shaded in red indicates the loadbearing masonry and in green indicates non-loadbearing brick veneer. The writings on the left-hand side note: 'non-structural veneer' and 'see [section] for shelf angle detail'. (Source: Buchan, Laird & Buchan 1971 copyright)

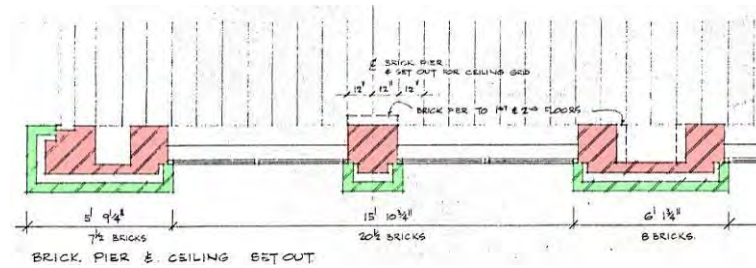


Figure 2. A horizontal section showing the pier types B (left), A (middle) and C (right). Shaded in red indicates the loadbearing masonry and in green indicates non-loadbearing brick veneer. (Source: Buchan, Laird & Buchan 1971 copyright)



Figure 3. A 1972 advertisement showing the newly erected Nubrik House viewed from the southwest (left) and another 1972 photograph showing the view from southeast (right). (Source: Age 6 November 1972:24; Age 18 December 1972:13)