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**How it is significant?**

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335-347 Swanston Street, Melbourne is of local historical, representative, aesthetic and associative significance to the City of Melbourne.

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**Why it is significant?**

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The building at 335-347 Swanston Street is historically significant for the evidence it provides of the importance of welfare provision in Melbourne. The building was constructed for the Manchester Unity Independent Order of Oddfellows to the design of architect Marcus Barlow in 1940-41. The site on which it stands has a longer association with the Manchester Unity Independent Order of Oddfellows, who first provided welfare to Melburnians at the site from 1863 continuing until 1946. The 1940-41 building had a mix of uses, incorporating a large hall and rooms for the use of the society, and factory space and shops available for lease. Compulsorily acquired by the Commonwealth government for use by the Department of Munitions in 1946, the building is also significant for its connection with the history of Commonwealth acquisition of land and buildings in Melbourne for use in association with military and defence, during and as a consequence of war. (Criterion A)

The former Manchester Unity Oddfellows building at 335-347 Swanston Street is significant as a largely intact example of commercial development in central Melbourne. It demonstrates the 40 metre (132 foot) height limit then in force during the period when the city had recovered from the Great Depression but World War Two imposed constraints on new buildings. The interwar Functionalist style was popular during the interwar and early postwar periods, usually for low rise industrial buildings, schools and institutional buildings. However, there were a number of commercial developments in central Melbourne that utilised the style for its modern or progressive aesthetic, including the building at 335-347 Swanston Street. The building at 335-347 Swanston Street exhibits the same design aesthetic and quality as other examples of the style. The building has a high degree of integrity, retaining its 'streamlined' horizontal spandrels, extensive horizontal bands of glazing and contrasting asymmetric vertical stair element that characterise the style. (Criterion D)

The former Manchester Unity Oddfellows building is of aesthetic significance as a substantial commercial building built in the interwar Functionalist style. Built to a design by architect Marcus Barlow, the building is distinguished as a pure example of the style, without the decorative articulation that derives from earlier styles. Barlow was a strong advocate of skyscrapers and American urbanism, the aesthetic influence of which can be observed in his design for the subject building. (Criterion E)

The site at 335-347 Swanson Street was long associated with the Manchester Unity Independent Order of Oddfellows (MUIOOF), a friendly society founded in Manchester, England, in 1810, for the purpose of providing financial and social assistance to members experiencing hardship. The first meeting of the Australia Felix Lodge of the MUIOOF was held in Melbourne in 1840. The society subsequently built a hall on part of the subject site c1863, which it occupied for 80 years. After constructing the new 12 storey premises on the site in 1940-41, the MUIOOF remained at today's 335-347 Swanston Street until the building was forcibly acquired by the Commonwealth in 1946 for military needs. The building's subsequent occupation by the Commonwealth Government is also significant for its connection to defence history and the requisition of land and buildings by the Commonwealth in World War Two. (Criterion H)

**Primary source**

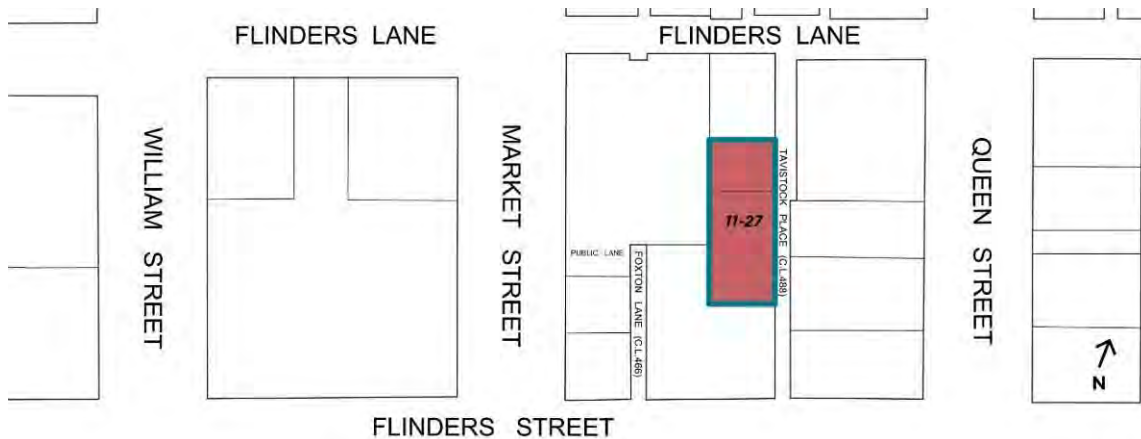
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[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\)](#)~~Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020) (updated March 2022)~~

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<b>SITE NAME</b>	CitiPower (Former Melbourne City Council substation)
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	11-27 Tavistock Place Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	109438



SURVEY DATE: October 2017

SURVEY BY: Context

<b>HERITAGE INVENTORY</b>	H7822-1874	<b>HERITAGE OVERLAY</b>	No
<b>PLACE TYPE</b>	Individual Heritage Place	<b>PROPOSED CATEGORY</b>	Significant
<b>DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:</b>	Not confirmed, but likely to be the architects' office at Melbourne City Council	<b>FORMER GRADE</b>	C
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Interwar Period (c1919-c1940)	<b>BUILDER:</b>	Not known
		<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	1926

**THEMES**

<b>ABORIGINAL THEMES</b>	<b>SUB-THEMES</b>
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
<b>HISTORIC THEMES</b>	<b>DOMINANT SUB-THEMES</b>
6 Creating a functioning city	6.3 Providing essential services

**LAND USE****HISTORIC LAND USE****Archaeological block no: 59****Inventory no: 874****Character of Occupation:** Commercial, Residential, Services/Infrastructure

Second land sale 1837, Block 3 Allotment 7, R. S. Webb.

1839 Williamson	Building possibly on site.
1837 & 1840 Hoddle	
1855 Kearney	
1866 Cox	
1877 Dove	Two-storey store and timber building in former yard areas.
1880 Panorama	
1888 Mahlstedt	Two-storey store and timber building in former yard areas.
1905/6 Mahlstedt	Two-buildings, Peterson & Co. Store, Valentine Fruit Store.

**THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE**

1890s	Warehouses and Yards
1920s	Power
1960s	Power

**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**

11-27 Tavistock Place is a large electrical substation built by the Melbourne City Council Electricity Supply Department in 1927 as part of an upgrade of electrical supply and distribution. It is one of several built at the edges of the Hoddle Grid which facilitated the residential, commercial and industrial expansion of the city.



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

### Creating a functioning city

#### *Providing essential services*

Melbourne was one of the first major cities in the world, along with London and New York, to have a public electricity supply where electricity was distributed from a central generating station for use by paying private customers and for public street lighting. The nascent electricity supply enterprises adapted quickly to a new public utility technology that had its origins in the UK, USA and Europe but 'which enabled local ingenuity and entrepreneurial spirit to flourish'. In addition, Melbourne's early public electricity supply development encompassed most of the evolutionary technical and structural facets of the industry (Pierce 2009:8). The Melbourne City council was the first metropolitan council to establish its own electricity supply and distribution network in 1894.

Ray Proudley in the *Encyclopædia of Melbourne* writes that:

*Locally, the first example of the general supply of electricity from a central point was the establishment by the Melbourne City Council of the Spencer Street Power Station from which the streets of the central business district were first illuminated on 7 March 1894...*

*[The first production and supply of electricity in Melbourne was commenced by private companies in the 1880s and 1890s.] In 1896 the Victorian Parliament enacted the Electric Light and Power Act to bring some sense of order and regulation to what until then had been a new and totally unregulated industry dealing in a potentially hazardous field (Proudley 2008).*

Under the 1896 Act, a number of local councils operated Municipal Electricity Undertakings (MEUs), enabling them to manage electricity distribution and retailing to their ratepayers. The City of Melbourne took up the first MEU in 1897.

By 1903 the Melbourne City Council Electricity Supply Department (MCCESD) was one of four electricity supply companies in Victoria and supplied 53.6 per cent of total generating capacity. Electric trams relied on this power supply when they commenced operation in Melbourne in 1906. The Melbourne Electricity Supply Co (MES Co.) formed in 1907, when the Electric Light & Traction Company changed its name (Pierce 2009:5-6).

Demand for electricity grew rapidly in the early decades of the twentieth century. The bulk of the Melbourne metropolitan area was supplied by just two companies, the aforementioned MCCESD and MES Co. They obtained their supply from the Spencer Street Power Station until the Newport A Power station was built at the mouth of the Yarra River between 1913 and 1918. It was constructed by the Victorian Railways to supply energy for the electrification of the suburban rail system, but also supplied bulk electricity to the MCCESD and MES Co (Edwards 1969:27-29).

The State Electricity Commission of Victoria (SECV) was established in 1921 under the chairmanship of Sir John Monash. The first SECV projects were the construction of the first brown coal power plant at Newport B (adjacent to the Victorian Railways Newport A traction power station), which came on line in 1923, and Yallourn A (the first Latrobe Valley power station), which opened in stages from 1924. Meanwhile, the SECV began to establish and develop its supply and distribution network. The first stage involved the construction of substations at key locations, which enabled the SECV to progressively assume control for the supply and distribution of power in the metropolitan area. From

1922 to 1924 four metropolitan substations were constructed and operating in the following areas: Melbourne City Council area (1923); Ascot Vale (1924); Brunswick (1924); and Collingwood (1924). In 1930, the MES Co. was formally acquired by the SECV (Pierce 2009:8).

As Proudley writes,

*However, as a consequence of the earlier private ownership, electricity distribution remained at least partly in the domain of local government with eleven Municipal Electrical Undertakings distributing and selling electricity purchased from the SECV [State Electricity Commission of Victoria], [which] [f]rom the 1950s to the early 1980s...expanded dramatically... (Proudley 2008).*

The Spencer Street Power Station supplied the inner city of Melbourne with electricity until the 1960s.

In 1994, the Kennett government launched an extensive reform of the Victorian electricity industry, resulting in the creation of five electricity distribution companies based on geographic regions that took over the responsibilities of the SECV and the 11 MEUs in inner Melbourne.

## SITE HISTORY

The site at 11-27 Tavistock Place was originally part of Crown Allotment 7, Section 3, purchased by R S Webb during the second Crown Land Sale in 1837 (Fels, Lavelle & Mider 1993, Inventory no 874). By 1839 the allotment had been subdivided and a right-of-way established, connecting Flinders and Little Flinders streets between Market and Queen streets (*Port Phillip Gazette* 16 March 1839:4). Tavistock Place was named as a lane by 1865, possibly after London's Tavistock Street (RHSV 2018).

Previous buildings on the subject site included a two-storey store and timber house occupied by Burns & Co in 1877, with a third building built in 1888. In 1910 Peterson & Co operated a store on the southern portion of the lot, while Valentine's Fruit Store occupied the northern end (Fels, Lavelle & Mider 1993, Inventory no 874; Mahlstedt Map, no 18, 1910). In 1922 the Bank of Victoria occupied 11-27 Tavistock Place (CT:V4196 F101).

### *Electrical substation*

Between 1898 and 1900 the Melbourne City Council acquired the assets of three private electricity companies operating within its municipal boundaries, creating a new company known as the Melbourne City Council Electricity Supply Department (MCCESD). In 1907, the City of Melbourne called for tenders for the erection of electric substations to plans and specifications available from the City Architect's Office (*Age* 3 July 1907:4).

A number of electric substations were subsequently constructed, including one in Park Street that was in existence by 1914 (*Brunswick and Coburg Leader* 6 February 1914:5). Many of the substations were erected as part of the electrification of Melbourne's suburban railway system.

In 1921, the MCCESD supply capacity was augmented by provision for importing up to 5000kW at 6.6kV from the newly constructed Victorian Railways power station at Newport. In addition, in 1925 the first stage of conversion to three-phase importation from the State Electricity Commission of Victoria (SECV) for the Melbourne Electric Supply Company (MES Co.) supply areas was introduced (Pierce 2009: 7-8). A number of substations throughout the city were upgraded or newly built in order

to convert the 22,000v alternating current generated at the Newport power station to a 1,500 direct current before it was transmitted to overhead wires for use by electric trains.

The subject site was nominated for the construction of an electrical substation at a Melbourne City Council meeting held at the Melbourne Town Hall on 24 April 1926. The electric supply committee recommended that authority be given for the purchase of land in Tavistock Place from owners, customs and shipping agents Mullaly and Byrne Pty Ltd, for £15,000 (*Age* 12 March 1915:14; 24 April 1926:16). The subject site, having a frontage of 103 feet 5 inches to the west of Tavistock Lane with buildings erected thereon, was required for the erection of a rotary substation. The cost of the purchase was charged to loan, as part of a broader undertaking of the council's electrical supply (*Age* 24 April 1926:16). In January 1927 the City of Melbourne advertised tenders for the erection of an electric substation in Tavistock Place, and it is assumed that construction would have taken place later that year (*Argus* 12 January 1927:3). No information about the building's designer could be found, although it is likely to have been designed by the then city architect. A 1925 map shows the substation in situ (Figure 1).

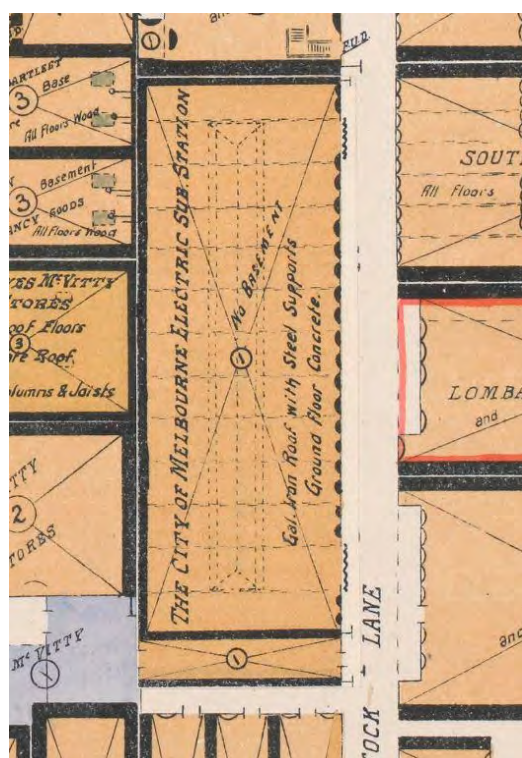


Figure 1. Detail from a 1925 Mahlstedt plan shows a substation occupying the subject site; presumably this map was updated after its construction in 1927. (Source: Mahlstedt Map Section 1, no 18, 1925)

The electric substation was operated by Melbourne City Council until the privatisation of the electricity industry saw it transferred to CitiPower Ltd in 1995 (CT:V4196 F101).

In recent years, 11-27 Tavistock Place has been used for storage and a band rehearsal space, until it was recently converted into corporate office space for Beon Energy Solutions, a subsidiary of CitiPower (DRIVENxDESIGN 2018).

## SITE DESCRIPTION

11-27 Tavistock Place is situated in a small laneway between Flinders Street and Flinders Lane. Like other substations in Spencer Street, George Parade and Park Street, these buildings are situated on the edges of the Hoddle Grid. 11-27 Tavistock Place is a large sub-station with a long rectangular footprint and two-storey height. The substation is built to the property boundary, forming an edge to the laneway. It is designed in an interwar industrial aesthetic with plain face brickwork and concrete lintels. The lower floor has recessed panels in an otherwise plain brick wall. These are now bricked in but probably formerly with ventilation louvres. The upper floor is lit from a regular pattern of windows set in pairs between pilasters. The window frames have been replaced. Above these is a continuous concrete lintel and a string course that forms a semi-circular arch over the doorway entrances. A similar detail of angled corbels leading from the concealed gutter to the pilasters, also found at 10-14 Park Street, is likely to indicate the same designer.

## INTEGRITY

11-27 Tavistock Place is a site that has high integrity. It retains its form and façade detail from the 1920s redevelopment of the site. The windows are replacements and the ventilation openings at ground level have been bricked up. The laneway character is enhanced by the side elevation of the similarly two-storey scale Tavistock House at 383 Flinders Lane (HO648). The interior has not been investigated and it is not known whether any of the machinery and equipment remains. The building does not retain its original use.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

### Electrical substations

The earliest substations were small-scaled buildings and their importance not necessarily reflected in their design. The expansion of electricity supply in the interwar period reflected the importance of this new type of industrial building and efforts were made to produce designs that reflected their location and the importance of their function. Substations benefited from the philosophy that saw industrial uses as worthy recipients of design inspiration and sometimes even flamboyance as a way of celebrating the new development of electricity. Electrical substations across Melbourne show a variety of architectural manners, generally reflecting the civic and urban design concerns of the municipal electricity supply departments, the earlier electric companies and the role of the SEC. Pavilion styles proliferate in parkland areas of the Domain and the Fitzroy Gardens. Other substations in urban streetscapes tend to more austere modernism or simply adhere to a functional industrial aesthetic or a simple gable roofed 'shed'. Even in the more austere examples there is generally brickwork detail and care taken in their massing and composition (Biosis, 2007:19-25).

A large portion of the first power station erected by Melbourne City Council is included on the Heritage Overlay (HO737). This complex comprises the surviving remnants of the power station erected in 1894 to power electric lighting in the streets (Figure 2). Several other buildings used as substations are within existing or proposed precinct HOs.

The following examples are comparable with the subject building, being of a similar style, scale and construction date, although their original uses vary. The images and descriptions are provided by CoM Maps unless stated otherwise, with images dated c2000 or later.

*Substation, 651-669 Lonsdale Street, 1915 (HO737)*

It is a three-storey brick substation with two basement levels, built in 1915.



Figure 2. Substation at 651-669 Lonsdale Street constructed 1915.

*620-648 Little Bourke Street, c1910-1925 (HO737 – recommended as significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review)*

CitiPower substation at (part of) 620-648 Little Bourke Street Melbourne is a two-storey interwar brick warehouse building constructed between 1910 and 1925 by Melbourne City Council Electricity for use as a carpenter's workshop to service its electricity supply station situated on the same site. The building was converted for use as an electric substation, likely in the 1920s or 1930s, and remains in use for that purpose today.



Figure 3. Substation at 620-648 Little Bourke Street constructed 1910-1925.

*1-3 Evans Lane, 1913 (Contributory in interim HO1297 Little Lonsdale Street Precinct)*

Built in 1913 by builders Reynolds Bros to designs by architect W Rain, this warehouse was converted to an electrical substation in 1928, as part of a program by the City of Melbourne to supply new substations in the 1920s. It continues to operate as a substation today.





Figure 4. 1-3 Evans Lane, constructed in 1913.

*28 Crossley Street, build date unknown (Contributory in HO500 Bourke Hill Precinct)*

A single-storey substation in Crossley Street, off Bourke Street.



Figure 5. Substation at 28 Crossley Street, unknown build date.

*12-14 Guildford Lane, 1920s (Contributory in HO1205 Guildford & Hardware Laneways Precinct)*

It is a single-storey brick electricity substation built in the 1920s.



Figure 6. 12-14 Guildford Lane, substation constructed c1920.

*21 Market Lane, build date unknown (Contributory in HO507 Little Bourke Street Precinct)*

It is a single-storey brick substation in Market Lane, off Bourke Street.



Figure 7. 21 Market Lane, build date unknown.

*10-14 Park Street, 1928 (Interim HO1257 – recommended as significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review)*

10-14 Park Street is one of several small-scale electrical substations built in the interwar period as part of the expansion of electricity supply and distribution. It operated for over 60 years as part of the Melbourne City Council's electricity supply department. It continues to operate as a substation.



Figure 8. Substation, 10-14 Park Street constructed 1928. (Source: Context 2017)



*23-25 George Street, 1938 (Interim HO1248 – recommended as significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review)*

23-25 George Parade is one of several small-scale electrical substations built in the interwar period as part of the expansion of electricity supply and distribution.



Figure 9. 23-25 George Parade constructed 1938. (Source: Context 2017)

11-27 Tavistock Place is a particularly large substation occupying a large extent of Tavistock Place. In size it is comparable to the substations at 651-699 Lonsdale Street and 620-648 Little Bourke Street (HO737). It is very similar to 651-699 Lonsdale Street in scale, form and detail, although the location of this place allows it to be viewed as a three-dimensional building, an aspect that is not possible in the confined space of Tavistock Place. Compared with other substations including 23-25 George Parade and 10-14 Park Street, 11-27 Tavistock Place is a more sophisticated composition with brickwork articulated by pilasters, a curved parapet highlighting the entry and the rhythm of paired windows. The substations share a common history in the development of electricity supply in the City of Melbourne and share an Interwar industrial aesthetic that contributes to the richness of building form and scale within Hoddle Grid Study Area.

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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**

*Age*, as cited.

*Argus*, as cited.

*Brunswick and Coburg Leader*, as cited.

DRIVENxDESIGN 2018, *Powercor, Tavistock*, <https://drivenxdesign.com/>, accessed online 1 April 2018.

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*Port Phillip Gazette*, as cited.

Royal Historical Society of Victoria (RHSV) 2018, *Discovery Series Brochures: Melbourne's streets and lanes: what's in a name?*, <http://historyvictoria.org.au>, accessed online 14 March 2018.

**PREVIOUS STUDIES**

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**Central Activities District  
Conservation Study 1985** E

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**Central City Heritage  
Study 1993** C

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

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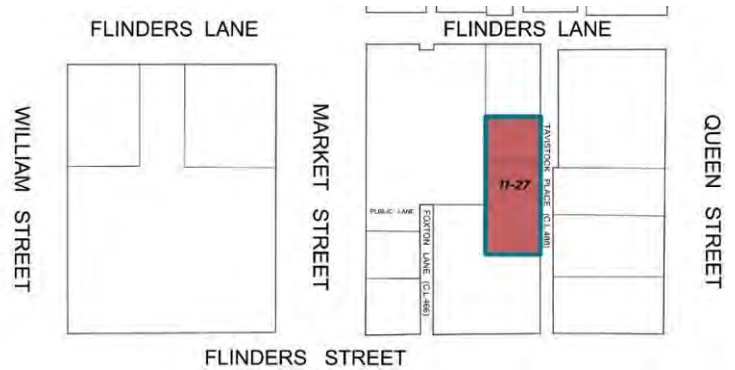
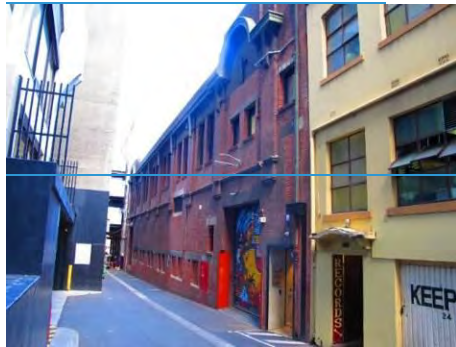
**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011** Ungraded

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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: [CitiPower \(Former Melbourne City Council substation\)](#)

PS ref no: [Interim-HO1249](#)



### What is significant?

The electrical substation at 11-27 Tavistock Place Melbourne, built in 1927 for the Melbourne City Council Electricity Supply Department as part of the augmentation of supply from the Victorian Railways power station at Newport.

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;

- Pattern and size of original fenestration, and rendered lintels;
- Continuous concrete lintel and a string course, forming a semi-circular arch over the doorway entrances; ~~and~~
- Pilasters and angled corbel detailing.

Later alterations, including those undertaken at ground level and replacement window frames, are not significant.

#### **How it is significant?**

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11-27 Tavistock Place, Melbourne, is of local historic, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Melbourne.

#### **Why it is significant?**

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The electrical substation at 11-27 Tavistock Place is historically significant for its association with the development of Melbourne's electricity supply network established in 1894. In this year, the Melbourne City Council was the first metropolitan council to establish its own electricity supply and distribution network, which, in turn, facilitated the residential, commercial and industrial expansion of the city. The former substation is of historical significance as a substantial remnant of the interwar infrastructure built by the Melbourne City council as part of Melbourne's expanding electricity network. (Criterion A)

11-27 Tavistock Place is a representative example of a Melbourne City Council substation designed by its own architects' branch. As one of the larger substations it shares characteristics of form, scale and materials with 651-699 Lonsdale Street and 620-648 Little Bourke Street. 11-27 Tavistock Place shares a common history in the development of electricity supply in the City of Melbourne and contributes to the architectural character of Tavistock Place. (Criterion D)

11-27 Tavistock Place is aesthetically significant for its sophisticated composition featuring red brickwork articulated by pilasters and stucco mouldings at eaves level and a horizontal string course. Other attributes include a curved parapet highlighting the entry and a rhythm of paired windows with continuous lintel to both ground and first floor levels. The angled corbels leading from the concealed gutter to the pilasters provide a pleasing rhythm to its façade that is accentuated by the window repetition. (Criterion E)

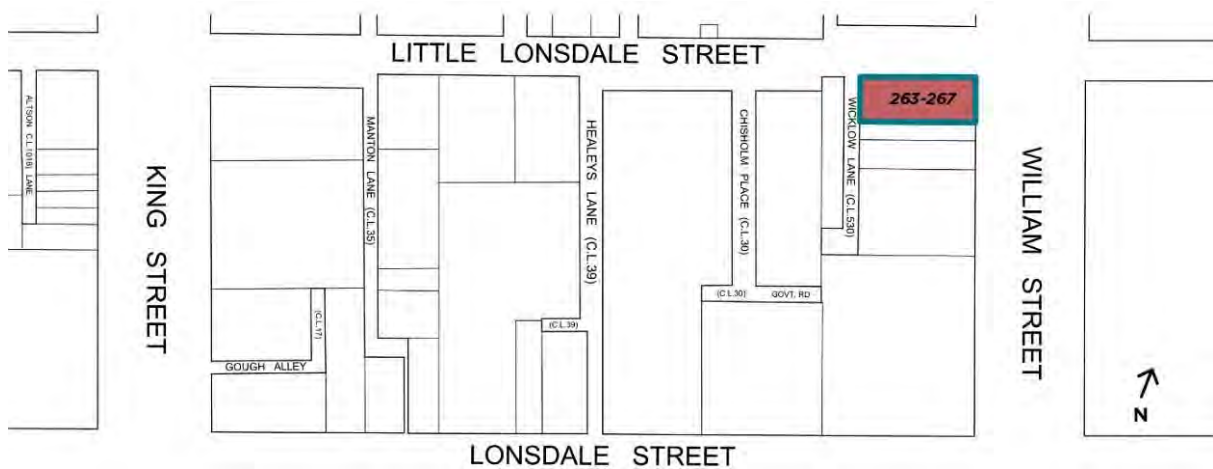
#### **Primary source**

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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>	Metropolitan Hotel
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	263-267 William Street Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	110106



SURVEY DATE: February 2018

SURVEY BY: Context

**HERITAGE INVENTORY** H7822-1146

**EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY** No

**PLACE TYPE** Individual Heritage Place

**PROPOSED CATEGORY** Significant

**FORMER GRADE** C

**DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:** W M Shields

**BUILDER:** Not known

**DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:** Interwar Period (c1919-c1940)

**DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:** 1925

## THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations.	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
HISTORIC THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
13 Enjoying the City	13.6 Eating and drinking
	OTHER SUB-THEMES
9 Working in the City	9.2 Women's work
11 Caring for the Sick and Destitute	11.2 Providing welfare services

## LAND USE

HISTORIC LAND USE	
<b>Archaeological block no:</b> 10	<b>Inventory no:</b> 146
<b>Character of Occupation:</b> Commercial	
1855 Kearney	Two-storey Metropolitan Hotel built 1854/5 shown 1855 map
1866 Cox	Metropolitan Hotel shown
1880 Panorama	As above
1905/6 Mahlstedt	As above
THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Hotels and Lodgings
1920s	Pubs
1960s	Pubs

## 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 site has been continually operating as a corner hotel since 1854. The existing building was built in 1925 and is a modest hotel building with simple neo-classical styling, typical of many hotels of the period.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

### Enjoying the city

#### *Eating and drinking*

Established from the 1850s, the modest corner pub has played a significant role in the history of local communities, particularly in the social life of the working community as a meeting place through to the early twentieth century. As townships and suburbs developed in Victoria, many such hotels were built on prominent corner locations on main thoroughfares to attract passing foot traffic en route to nearby houses and commercial, manufacturing and industrial buildings.

Alcohol was a mainstay of a frontier colonial town. During the early period of settlement, many people resorted to alcoholic beverages rather than drink the city's unpalatable and contaminated water.

Hotels were abundant in Melbourne; in working-class areas, such as Carlton, there was virtually one on every corner. One of Melbourne city's first permanent buildings was Fawkner's hotel established in 1836 on the corner of William Street and Flinders Lane (Context 2012: 98).

The role of the hotel as a provider of accommodation for travelers, and as an entertainment venue and meeting place for local community organisations diminished over time. Between 1890 and 1940, the typical pub became 'much less a community centre and more a male dominated drinking house' (Malone 1988:30). Nevertheless, hotels have served and continue to serve as local meeting places with a regular clientele, and favoured because of their location near city workplaces. 'People like to go to places and drink with other people... and the corner pub persist as a sort of "home away from home" in a way that wine bars and nightclubs will never be' (Wright in Lucas 2017).

Hotels responded to the changing times and circumstances. In the early 1900s, falling hotel standards and pressure from the temperance movement prompted the state government to reduce the number of liquor licenses. From 1907 the Licences' Reduction Board reduced the number of hotels in all districts to 1885 statutory levels. Many hotel buildings were subsequently demolished or adapted to different uses; other hotel owners upgraded and refurbished their buildings from this period through to the 1920s and 1930s in order to meet the new licensing conditions that were contingent on the provision of adequate accommodation and other facilities (Dunstan 2008).

The 'early closing' of hotels at 6.00pm, an effort to curb drunkenness by restrictive legislation, caused other anti-social behaviour, and was overturned in 1966 (Context 2012:98).

Of the approximate 100 hotels in existence in central Melbourne in the 1920s, only approximately 45 hotels remained by the 1960s. Today, only approximately 12 hotels in central Melbourne retain their historic use and form (CoM 2018).

### Working in the city

#### *Women's work*

Women were restricted in terms of the paid work that was available to them. Single women found employment as domestic servants and nursemaids in private homes, although these positions had a high turnover — this situation was disparaged by employers as 'the servant problem'. Women also worked as school teachers and nurses, and as 'shop girls', waitresses and publicans. (Context 2012: 55).

## Caring for the sick and destitute

### *Providing welfare services*

The hardships of the 1890s depression highlighted the need for improved welfare provisions. There was soon a high rate of unemployment in Melbourne and as a result families suffered, especially children, who were often being left in the care of others or placed in institutional care.

In the twentieth century significant contributions to social welfare in Melbourne were also made by private benefactors. Notable among these were successful businessmen, such as the retailers Alfred Edmonds and Sidney Myer. Myer famously provided Christmas dinner for Melbourne's poor and homeless at the Exhibition Building each year (Context 2012: 64-5).

## SITE HISTORY

The land at 263-267 William Street on the corner allotment at William and Little Lonsdale streets, is part of Crown Allotment 9, Section 31, purchased by Sylvester J Browne by 1839.

A two-storey bluestone hotel named the Metropolitan Hotel and an adjoining shop currently at 261 William Street (HO1088, VHI H7822-1145) opened on the subject site on 17 October 1854, on the same day of the opening of the Melbourne Exhibition in 1854, which was held in the 'Crystal Palace' on the opposite side of William Street (*Argus* 15 October 1854:8) (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Former bluestone hotel building and the adjoining shop at 261 William Street (extant) at the end of the 1860s. (Source: Noone 1869, SLV)

The first proprietor of the Metropolitan Hotel was John M Chisholm, an early settler, followed by Robert Wilson in 1855; James Carrol in 1858; Charles Forrester in 1859-1861; Mrs Margaret Forrester in 1874; and Gilbert Duncan in 1880 (Butler 2011:660; *Argus* 15 October 1854:8).

In 1891, the Metropolitan Hotel was described as 'a substantial two-storey bluestone building...containing 11 rooms...kitchen, [and] servant's room' (*Argus* 22 July 1891:2).

The Metropolitan Hotel was one of many Victorian hotels in the 1920s and 1930s to undergo extensive alterations and additions. These changes were initiated by the demands of the Liquor Licenses Reduction Board, established in 1906, which required hotel owners to provide adequate accommodation and facilities for the public.

In January 1925, architect William McMichael Shields invited tenders for the re-erection of the Metropolitan Hotel in brick, for the then owner Mrs C Englehardt. Quantity surveyors were Anderson, Alexander and Hay (*Age* 16 January 1925:6).

Prior to 1925, the bluestone hotel building occupied only about one third of the allotment, which measures 40 by 100 feet, while the rear of the allotment featured a number of smaller structures (Figure 2). The brick reconstruction in 1925 extended the building footprint to the allotment boundaries (Figure 3) (MMBW Detail Plan no 736, 1895; Mahlstedt Section 2, Map no 2a, 1923, Mahlstedt Section 2, Map no 2a, 1962).

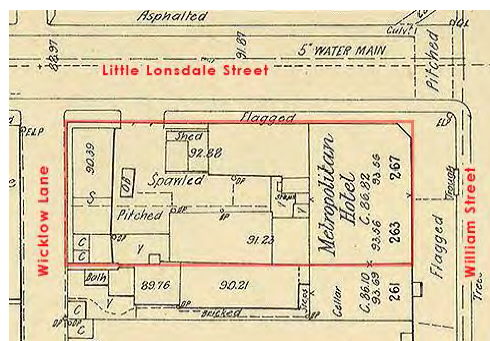


Figure 2. An 1895 MMBW plan showing the former Metropolitan Hotel and rear buildings. (Source: MMBW Detail Plan no 736, 1895, SLV)

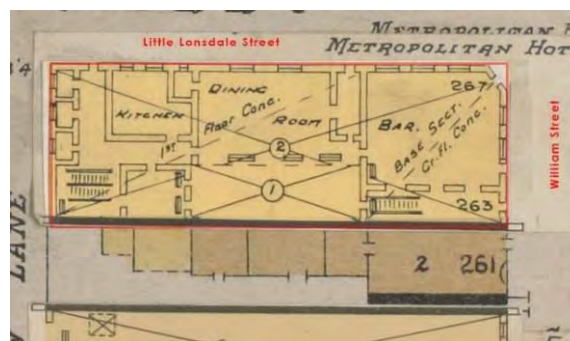


Figure 3. The Metropolitan Hotel surveyed in the late 1920s, soon after the re-erection in brick in 1925. (Source: Mahlstedt Section 2, Map no 2a, c1928, SLV)

According to the City of Melbourne fire survey plan published in the 1920s, the new Metropolitan Hotel premises contained a large front bar, a dining room, a kitchen, and toilets on the ground floor (Mahlstedt Section 2, Map no 2a, c1928).

In 1932, the Metropolitan Hotel was described in an auction notice as containing a bar, four parlours, a dining room, and 15 bedrooms (*Age* 5 Oct 1932:2). In 1938, the hotel was remodelled, and hot and cold-water showers installed (*Age* 17 December 1938:19).

During the first half of the twentieth century, the licensees of the Metropolitan Hotel were predominantly women, including: Miss Alice J Morton, 1900; Mrs Esther Kingdon, 1910; Mrs S J Hughes, 1920; Miss K Richardson, 1930; and Mrs L E Power, 1940 (S&Mc 1900-1940).

Under Mrs Power's management during the period between c1938 and 1949, the Metropolitan Hotel gained a reputation for charitable acts. In addition to weekly donations of her own, Mrs Power formed the youth group 'Boys of the Metropolitan Hotel' to raise money for the Children's Hospital appeal, which later became the Good Friday appeal. Mrs Power was also the organiser of the 'Fags for Fighters' campaign, funded and promoted by the *Sporting Globe*, for supplying cigarettes to Australian soldiers fighting in World War Two (*Sporting Globe* 9 April 1949:15). The Metropolitan Hotel continues to partner with leading charity groups to deliver events today (The Metropolitan Hotel 2018).



A photograph from the 1960s (Figure 4) shows the Metropolitan Hotel with its original 1925 design. The upper-storey maintains its face brick wall, and the ground floor has been rendered and painted. The thin metal art deco style signage may be a slightly later addition, as this style became popular in Melbourne around the mid-1930s-40s. The Metropolitan Hotel continues to operate from the same premises at 263-267 William Street today.



Figure 4. The Metropolitan Hotel with face brick walls in c1960s. (Source: Halla c1960s, SLV)

#### *W M Shields, architect*

William McMichael Shields was born in Sunbury in 1869, to Scottish parents, Dr Andrew and Agnes Shields. After completing his education at Hawthorn Grammar School and Scotch College, he was articled in the office of architect Guyon Purchas, where he went into partnership with Purchas at the age of 27 (Bauer, 2015:15-6).

At the turn of the twentieth century, Shields commenced his own practice and built up a reputation as architect of the Children's Hospital, the Women's Hospital and the Scots' Church, Melbourne. He designed more than 250 small and large projects and built more than 64 residential and 21 commercial buildings, mostly constructed in and around Melbourne. His last tender notice in 1935 appears in conjunction with Leighton Erwin, a well-known hospital architect (Bauer, 2015:16-7).

William Shields was a fellow of Royal Victorian Institute of Architecture from 1903 and a long-time affiliate of the Scots' Church, where he carried out a number of construction and restoration projects and where he had his wedding (Bauer, 2015:17). William Shields died in Hawthorn East in 1949.

#### **COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS**

##### *Landmark hotel in Melbourne's legal precinct*

The Metropolitan Hotel has provided a meeting place for individuals and groups from its establishment in 1854, with Melbourne Literary Institute meetings and election meetings (*Argus* 3 May 1867: 8; *Argus* 1 November 1864:6) held at the premises from the 1860s. The hotel also provided a home to a number of Melbourne residents through to the 1930s (*Argus* 24 April 1936:1).

The area bound by Collins, William, Lonsdale and Queen streets is known as Melbourne's legal precinct, with concentration of legal profession, courts and government offices associated with the legal system (Bamford 2008). The Metropolitan Hotel has served its legal precinct 'neighbourhood' for decades. Located close to the Melbourne Magistrates Court, County Court and nearby legal chambers, the Metropolitan Hotel has long been the 'watering hole' favoured by the legal fraternity, particularly criminal barristers and solicitors, as well as by law enforcement and those attending court. These connections date back decades, and continue today (*Age* 14 December 1997:12; *Age* 26 October 1998:13; *Age* 29 June 2006:11). It has also been a past favourite for journalists at the *Age*, the ABC (ABC Radio headquarters was at Broadcast House in Lonsdale Street from 1945 to 1995), *Nation Review* (1970-1981), and foreign affairs staff from Radio Australia (*Age* 5 October 1997:7).

In 2016, the *Age* wrote that a sale was expected, for the 'Lawyers' pub' Metropolitan Hotel, 'a popular legal district meeting place', which 'bookmarks the western end of the city's legal precinct' (*Age* 9 March 2016:28).

## SITE DESCRIPTION

The brick hotel at 263-267 William Street is located on the corner of William and Little Lonsdale streets. It is a two-storey brick building with a hipped roof concealed behind a parapet wall. Like many corner hotels, it is built directly to the street boundaries with a chamfered corner marking the entry point to the hotel.

Detailing to the façade is simple with a restrained neo-classical character typical of the interwar period. Varying elements of the façade reference classical motifs and styling. Simple pilasters occur around both street elevations of the second storey of the building, running to the full height of the parapet. A deep moulded cornice runs around the upper section of the parapet, and a second, narrower cornice runs around each elevation, just above window height.

The face brick (now overpainted) façade has rendered bays at the corner, at the northern end of the William Street elevation, and in the middle and eastern end of the Little Lonsdale elevation. The latter bays have arched windows with an arched cornice above. Rectangular window openings to the rest of the façade were originally spaced in a regular pattern. Windows are double hung sash windows with stone sills intact. Windows closest to the corner on each elevation have been replaced by oversized arched windows more recently. An early brick chimney exists on the northern edge of the building.

On the ground level, openings resemble the original but have been widened or lengthened in some locations. Windows and doors have been replaced. The tiled ground floor dado shown on the c1960s photo has been removed and the whole of the lower façade has been rendered. On the upper façade, face brick noted in the same photo has been overpainted.

The art deco style metal lettering reading 'Metropolitan' on the William Street elevation remains, but other signage noted in the c1960s photo has been removed.

## INTEGRITY

The hotel building retains its form, including the chamfered corner and hipped roof concealed behind a parapet wall. Alterations have occurred to some windows and doors on both levels. Wall finishes have been altered with overpainting/rendering occurring on both levels and removal of the tiled dado at street level. Some early signage has been removed on both faces, with the word 'Metropolitan' remaining on the William Street face.



## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Hotels are a common building typology in the City of Melbourne, with examples dating from the early years of the establishment of Melbourne through until the present. Many hotels occupied corner sites, and a number of nineteenth century hotels were rebuilt or substantially altered during the 1920s and 1930s, incorporating improved amenities in response to the requirements of liquor licencing.

The subject building at 263-267 William Street dates from 1925. It can be compared with the following interwar examples, drawn chiefly from the Central City Heritage Review 2011 and other earlier studies, being of a similar use, scale, location and creation date.

The below images and descriptions are provided by CoM Maps unless stated otherwise, with images dating from c2000 or later.

Selected examples of corner hotels include:

*Royal Mail Hotel, 519 Spencer Street, West Melbourne, 1938 (HO783)*

The Royal Mail Hotel was built in 1938 and features a art-deco parapet over the splayed corner with a fairly intact first floor to both street elevations. It features a heavily altered ground floor.



Figure 5. Royal Mail Hotel, 519 Spencer Street West Melbourne constructed 1938. (Source: Google Maps)

*Hotel Spencer, 475 Spencer Street, West Melbourne, mid-1920s (HO781)*

The Hotel Spencer is built in the interwar classical revival style over three-storeys. The ground floor has been altered through the insertion of new doors and windows; however the upper floors are intact.



Figure 6. Hotel Spencer 475 Spencer Street West Melbourne constructed c1920.

*Waterside Hotel, 508-514 Flinders Street, 1925 (HO1038)*

Built on the site of the old London and Carnarvon Hotel, this three-storey brick hotel (1925) with a corner tower was designed by Harry R Johnson. It still operates as a hotel and was refurbished in 2004.



Figure 7. 508-514 Flinders Street constructed 1925.

It is estimated that over 100 hotels were operating in the Hoddle Grid Study Area in the 1920s, with this declining to about 45 in the 1960s. Today it is estimated that there are 12 traditional hotels still operating in the city centre with a further approximately 15 hotel buildings remaining but not in use as hotels. These numbers indicate that hotels are a declining building type and use within the Study Area. The fringes of the city retain a number of hotels from the interwar period as indicated by the Hotel Spencer and Royal Mail Hotel.

It is relatively common for corner sites to be set aside as hotels in the 1850s and for redevelopment to occur at a later time when the buildings were no longer able to meet licensing requirements. Stylistically the Metropolitan Hotel is conservative compared with this cohort, and somewhat similar to the Royal Mail Hotel, although lacking the art deco styling. The Hotel Spencer is an elegant example of the classical revival style and the Waterside Hotel is distinguished through its flamboyant corner tower, although otherwise quite typical in form and detail. Against this group the Metropolitan Hotel can be seen as representative of hotels of the interwar period.

**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 aspect 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

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**Central City Heritage  
Study 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**

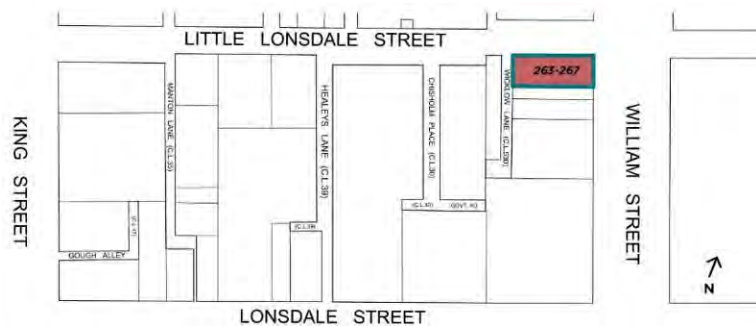
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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Metropolitan Hotel

**PS ref no:** [Interim HOHO1231](#)



### What is significant?

Metropolitan Hotel at 263-267 William Street, Melbourne, built in 1925.

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;
- Hipped roof and flat parapet;
- Chamfered corner entry, and the pattern and size of original fenestration with double hung sash windows and stone sills;
- Classical motifs and styling to the façade including pilasters and major and minor cornice;
- Early brick chimney; ~~and~~
- Art deco style metal lettering reading 'Metropolitan' on the William Street façade.

Later alterations made to the facades including the large round arched windows and corner window at the upper level and altered window and door openings at the ground level are not significant.

### How it is significant?

Metropolitan Hotel at 263-267 William Street, Melbourne, is of local historic, rarity, representative and social significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

The Metropolitan Hotel building at 263-267 William Street is historically significant due to its association with the long term and continued operation of the Metropolitan Hotel on the same corner site from 1854 to present day. The Metropolitan Hotel is of historical significance for its association with the establishment of city hotels as meeting places; the increased occupation of women as publicans, particularly from the early 1900s; and the hotel's role from the late 1930s in raising money for charity. As one of a number of Melbourne hotels that underwent significant change in the 1920s and 1930s due to the demands of the Liquor Licenses Reduction Board from 1907, requiring hotel owners to provide adequate accommodation and facilities for the public, the Metropolitan Hotel is illustrative of the substantial hotel development that took place at this time. (Criterion A)



The Metropolitan Hotel is a rare surviving example of a traditional corner hotel. Once a ubiquitous land use and activity, the number of traditional hotels are in severe decline in the Hoddle Grid Study Area, reducing from over 100 in the 1920s, to approximately 45 in the 1960s, and with around 12 currently retaining their location, building form and use. (Criterion B)

The Metropolitan Hotel at 263-267 William Street is a representative example of a hotel from the interwar period. This typology is characterised by the corner location and splayed entrance, two-storey building form with residential accommodation on the first floor and public areas on the ground floor. A key characteristic of the Metropolitan Hotel is the restrained neo-classical character typical of the interwar period. Its integrity is consistent with other examples where the pattern and type of doors and windows have been altered, particularly to the ground floor. (Criterion D)

The Metropolitan Hotel is of social significance for its long connections with the city, as a place of social congregation for more than 160 years, providing a meeting place for particular organisations and groups, as well as for informal meetings, social activities and celebrations. The social significance of the Metropolitan Hotel is evidenced by the regular, long-term, and continuous use as a hotel – a ‘public house’ – serving the legal fraternity and court visitors in particular and continuing to serve that function today. (Criterion G)

#### **Primary source**

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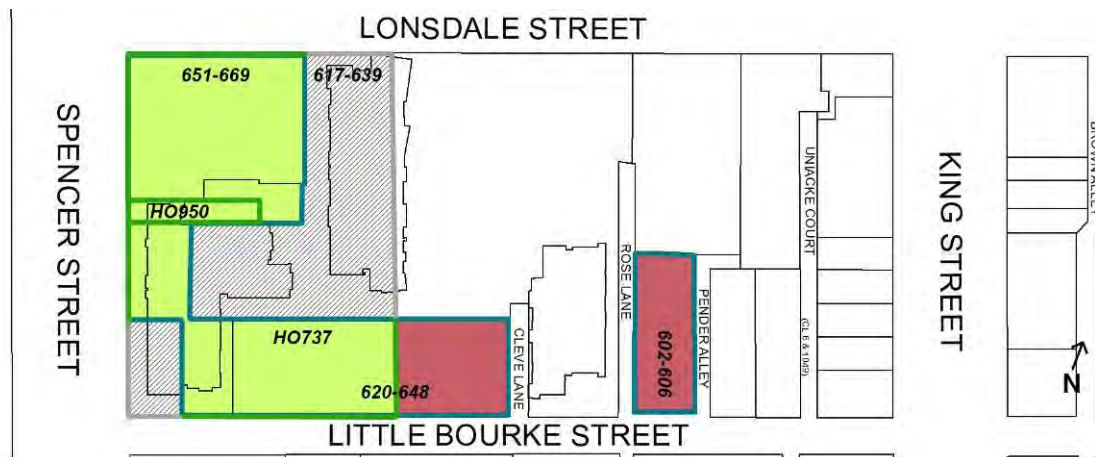
[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\)](#)~~Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)~~ [Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\) \(updated March 2022\)](#)



# REVISIONS TO EXISTING INDIVIDUAL HERITAGE OVERLAY



<b>SITE NAME</b>	Former Melbourne City Council Power Station
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	(Part of) 617-639 Lonsdale Street, 651-669 Lonsdale Street, 602-606 Little Bourke Street, and 620-648 Little Bourke Street Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	110703, 110704, 110706, 105718



SURVEY DATE: March 2019

SURVEY BY: Context

<b>HERITAGE INVENTORY</b>	H7822-1218	<b>EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY</b>	HO737 (204-240 Spencer Street) VHR H2117, HO950 (Overhead Water Tank)
<b>PLACE TYPE</b>	Individual heritage place	<b>PROPOSED CATEGORY</b>	Significant
		<b>FORMER GRADE</b>	Significant, C, ungraded
<b>DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:</b>	MCC Electricity Supply Department, MCC architects	<b>BUILDER:</b>	Not known
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Federation/Edwardian Period (1901-c1918) Interwar Period (c1919-c1940) Postwar Period (c1945-1975) Late Twentieth Century (c1975-1999)	<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	1908-85

## THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations.	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here.
HISTORIC THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
6 Creating a functioning city	6.3 Providing essential services

## LAND USE

HISTORIC LAND USE	
Archaeological block no: 17	Inventory no: 219
<b>Character of Occupation:</b> Commercial, Government, Services/Infrastructure	
Refer to M. Fels, History (prepared for the CAD Archaeological Management Plan). Also: Photo in MCC Electricity Supply History; Known to have been a bore shaft excavated to 220 feet on this site and possibly a well.	
1866 Cox	Map shows building set-back from street
1880 Panorama	Panorama shows small buildings scattered across largely vacant site
1888 Mahlstedt	Timber yard
1905/6 Mahlstedt	City Council yards and sheds. Also City of Melbourne Electric Light Station (detailed layout shown)
THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Factory and workshop, Power
1920s	Factory and workshop, Power
1960s	Power, Warehouses

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an amendment to HO737. The former Melbourne City Council Power Station is recommended as an individual place.

**Extent of overlay:** Refer to map.

## SUMMARY

First established in 1894, the former Melbourne City Council Power Station site today comprises a complex of buildings built between 1908 and 1985, as well as external spaces and an overhead water tank. The elements that remain were built at different times and demonstrate the evolution of the power station and aspects of how it functioned. Key elements include the 1920 CitiPower substation at 651-669 Lonsdale Street (Substation J) and its 1950 and 1953 extensions, the 1908 Offices building (Spencer Street frontage), the 1908 Economiser building (Little Bourke Street frontage) at part of 617-639 Lonsdale Street, the 1888 overhead water tank in Watertank Way (relocated to the current site in 1927), the two CitiPower substations (built after 1925 and 1985, respectively) at 620-648 Little Bourke Street, and the 1949-55 Melbourne City Council Store Building at 602-606 Little Bourke Street.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

### Creating a functioning city

#### *Providing essential services*

The Melbourne City Council was the first Australian metropolitan council to establish its own electricity supply and distribution network in 1894, following the first production and supply of electricity commenced by private companies in the 1880s and 1890s. Melbourne was also one of the first major cities in the world, along with London and New York, to have a public electricity supply where electricity was distributed from a central generating station for use by paying private customers and for public street lighting. The nascent electricity supply enterprises adapted quickly to a new public utility technology that had its origins in the UK, USA and Europe but which, as electrical engineer Miles Pierce notes, 'enabled local ingenuity and entrepreneurial spirit to flourish'. In addition, Pierce writes, 'Melbourne's early public electricity supply development encompassed most of the evolutionary technical and structural facets of the industry' (Pierce 2010:64-658).

Ray Proudley in the *Encyclopedia of Melbourne* writes that:

*In the late 1870s...electric lighting had its first impact on gas companies around the world. In [Australia] in 1881 the Victorian Electric Light Co. displayed an electric lamp (with the generator powered by a gas engine) outside its Swanston Street premises and the first Melbourne Electrical Exhibition took place in the following year...*

*Small electricity generating plants were [subsequently] installed to illuminate individual premises. The Victorian Electric Light Co. was succeeded by the Australian Electric Co. and later by the Melbourne Electric Supply Co. among numerous others. Locally, the first example of the general supply of electricity from a central point was the establishment by the Melbourne City Council of the Spencer Street Power Station from which the streets of the central business district were first illuminated on 7 March 1894...*

*In 1896 the Victorian Parliament enacted the Electric Light and Power Act to bring some sense of order and regulation to what until then had been a new and totally unregulated industry dealing in a potentially hazardous field (Proudley 2008).*

Under the 1896 Act, a number of local councils operated Municipal Electricity Undertakings (MEUs), enabling them to manage electricity distribution and retailing to their ratepayers. The City of Melbourne took up the first MEU in 1897. Between 1898 and 1900 the Melbourne City Council acquired the assets of three private electricity companies operating within its municipal boundaries, creating a new company known as the Melbourne City Council Electricity Supply Department (MCCESD).

The Melbourne Electricity Supply Co (MES Co) formed in 1907, to service the metropolitan Melbourne region in general, changing its name from the Electric Light & Traction Company (Pierce 2010:62).

Demand for electricity grew rapidly in the early decades of the twentieth century. The bulk of the Melbourne metropolitan area was supplied by just two companies, the aforementioned MCCESD and MES Co. They obtained their supply from the Spencer Street Power Station until the Newport A Power station was built at the mouth of the Yarra River between 1913 and 1918. It was constructed



by the Victorian Railways to supply energy for the electrification of the suburban rail system from 1919, but also supplied bulk electricity to the MCCESD and MES Co (Edwards 1969:27-29).

The State Electricity Commission of Victoria (SECV) was established in 1921 under the chairmanship of Sir John Monash. The first SECV projects were the construction of the first brown coal power plant at Newport B (adjacent to the Victorian Railways Newport A Traction Power Station), opened in 1921, and Yallourn A (the first Latrobe Valley power station), which opened in stages from 1924.

Meanwhile, the SECV began to establish and develop its supply and distribution network. The first stage involved the construction of substations at key locations, which enabled the SECV to progressively assume control for the supply and distribution of power in the metropolitan area. From 1922 to 1924 four metropolitan substations were constructed: in the Melbourne City Council area, in operation from 1923; in Ascot Vale, in operation from 1924; in Brunswick, in operation from 1924; and in Collingwood, in operation from 1924. In 1930, the MES Co. was formally acquired by the SECV (Pierce 2010:64).

As Proudley writes,

*However, as a consequence of the earlier private ownership, electricity distribution remained at least partly in the domain of local government with eleven Municipal Electrical Undertakings distributing and selling electricity purchased from the SECV [State Electricity Commission of Victoria], [which] [f]rom the 1950s to the early 1980s...expanded dramatically (Proudley 2008).*

The Spencer Street Power Station supplied the inner city of Melbourne with electricity until the 1970s.

In 1994, the Kennett government launched an extensive reform of the Victorian electricity industry, resulting in the creation of five electricity distribution companies based on geographic regions that took over the responsibilities of the SECV and the 11 MEUs in inner Melbourne.

## **SITE HISTORY**

The site of interest comprises the extant former Melbourne City Council Power Station buildings with frontages to Lonsdale, Spencer and Little Bourke streets, within the block bound by Lonsdale, Spencer, Little Bourke and King streets. Melbourne City Council Power Station (MCC Power Station) was also commonly known as the Spencer Street Power Station.

The subject buildings were developed in stages between 1908 and 1985, on or nearby the former MCC Power Station site, which existed on part of Crown Allotments 15 to 19, Block 17, which were set aside as a permanent reserve for general produce market ('Plan of Melbourne' 1838). 602-606 Little Bourke is located on part of Crown Allotment 12 and 13, Block 17, offered for sale in 1839 ('Plan of Melbourne' 1838).

Prior to its development as a municipal power station, the site was a timber yard surrounded by one to three storey brick buildings (see Figure 1).

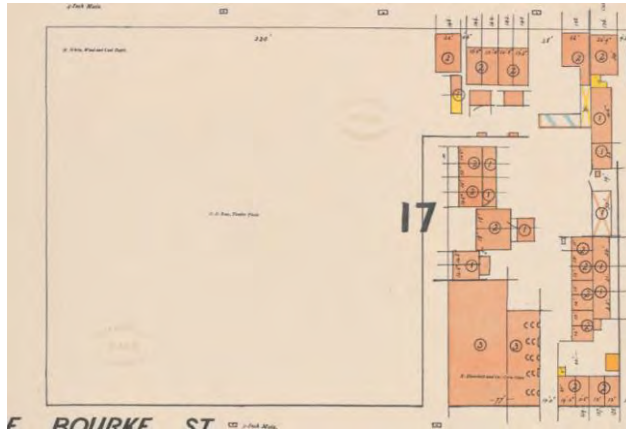


Figure 1. Detail from an 1888 fire survey plan shows the site as a timber yard and surrounding brick buildings prior to its development as a municipal power station. (source: Mahlstedt Map no 17, 1888)

An existing heritage citation prepared by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) describes the inception of the former MCC Power Station:

*A power station to generate electricity was established on the corner of Spencer and Little Bourke streets in 1894 by the Melbourne City Council, initially to supply electricity for street lighting. The establishment of the Melbourne City Council Electricity Supply Department (MCCESD) was a major departure from privately owned power generators at the time, and the City of Melbourne was the first to do so. It was one of only four generators in the State at the time, and produced half the electricity then produced. The popularity of electricity for a range of purposes led to the rapid expansion of the facility, which saw the original turbine room and boiler house greatly expanded and altered many times before WWI ('Former Melbourne Power Station' VHD Place ID 65593).*

The 1895 Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) plan shows the 1894 Electric Light Works building (altered and partially demolished) at the corner of Little Bourke and Spencer streets, surrounded by Melbourne City Council's corporate yard (see Figure 2). Not yet being part of the MCCESD site this time, part of 620-648 Little Bourke Street was occupied by a store, and the 602-606 Little Bourke St site was occupied by small-scale residences (MMBW Detail Plan no 737, 1895, SLV).

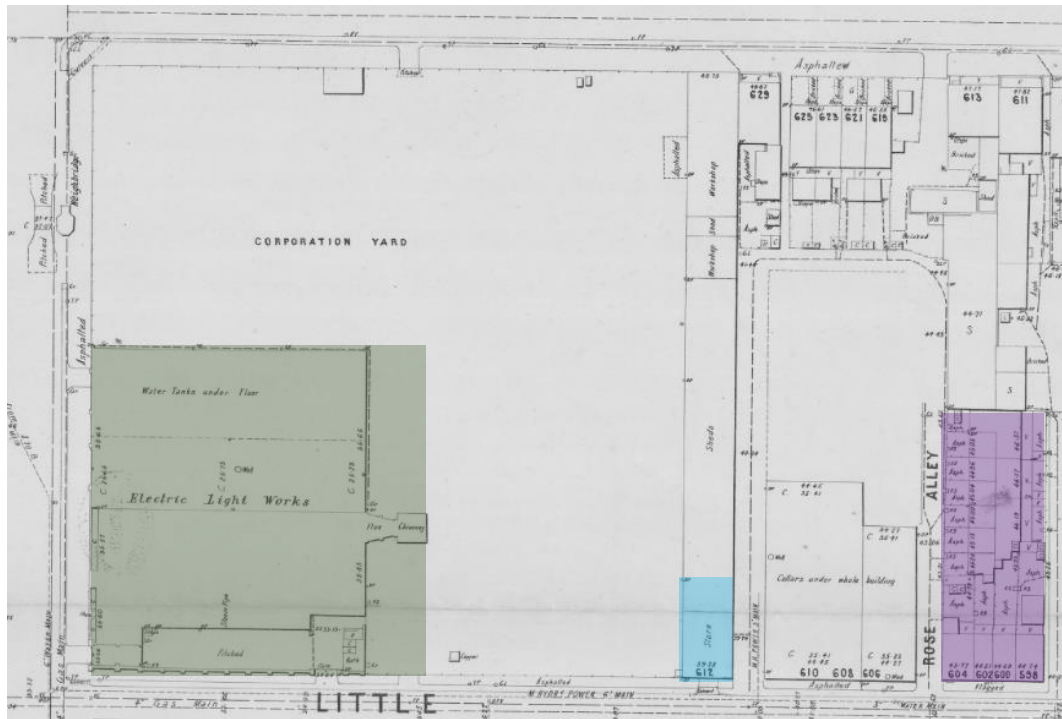


Figure 2. Detail from a Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works plan, showing the Electric Light Works at the corner of Little Bourke and Spencer streets (shaded green), a store occupying part of 620-648 Little Bourke Street (shaded blue), and the 602-606 Little Bourke St site (shaded purple), occupied by residences. (source: MMBW Detail Plan no 737, 1895, SLV)

In the first years of the twentieth century as the demand for electricity grew, the MCC Power Station in Spencer Street was substantially expanded. The changes between 1903 and 1907 involved extension of the Boiler House (1903), construction of a 24-inch diameter cast iron pipe to substitute the original cooling water tower (1904), and construction of a large chimney and coal facility (1907) (Elphinstone 1986:9). None of these early structures built from 1903 to 1907 remain today.

In 1908, the Offices building extant in Spencer Street replaced the front part of the 1894 turbine hall, and the Pumping House (later known as Economiser building) extant in Little Bourke Street were constructed, attached to the engine room which ran along Little Bourke Street. They were designed by the MCCESD ('Former Melbourne Power Station' VHD Place ID 65593).

The 1910 Mahlstedt plan shows the new Offices building fronting Spencer Street and the Pumping House (later Economiser building), both connected to the Boiler House (1903) and the 1894 turbine hall. The turbine hall, labelled 'Dynamo House' in Figure 3, had been extended towards east by this time. The site today known as 620-648 Little Bourke Street was occupied by the 1903 Boiler House and an attached iron store housing a chimney. The 602-606 Little Bourke Street site was cleared of the former small-scale residences by this time (Figure 3).

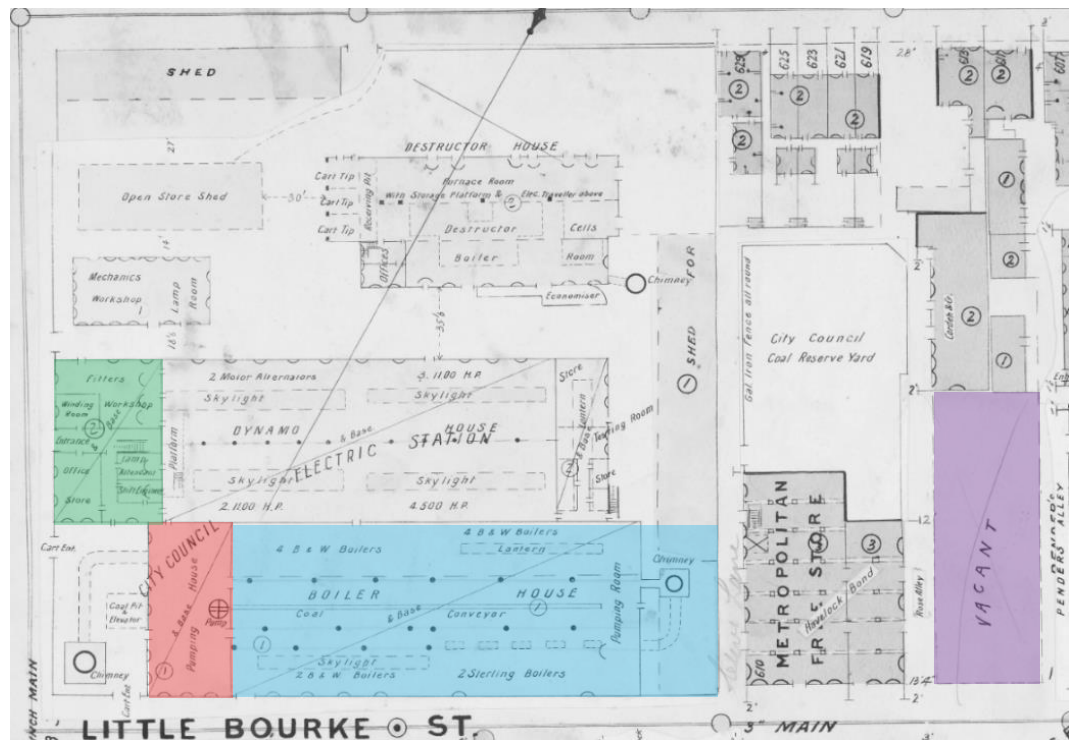


Figure 3. Detail from a 1910 fire survey plan shows the Pumping House (Economiser building, shaded red) and the Offices fronting Spencer Street (shaded green). The 620-648 Little Bourke Street site (shaded blue) was occupied by the 1903 Boiler House and an attached iron shed to east, and the 602-606 Little Bourke Street site was vacant (shaded purple). (Source: Mahlstedt Map Section 1, no 22, 1910)

Further additions followed in the 1920s. The three-storey brick substation, today known as Substation J, was constructed in 1920, at the south-east corner of Lonsdale and Spencer streets (see Figure 4 and Figure 5) replacing iron sheds. The current two-storey brick building (known as Substation JA) on the eastern portion of 620-648 Little Bourke Street was constructed shortly after 1925, as a carpenters' workshop, which was part of a larger complex of brick workshops for tradesmen including blacksmiths and fitters built along Cleve Lane. Internally connected to the 1903 Boiler House fronting Little Bourke Street, these workshops were likely established to service the power station complex (see Figure 5).



Figure 4. Photograph from c1920 of the former MCC Power Station from the corner of Lonsdale and Spencer streets, showing Substation J and Offices building fronting Spencer Street. (Source: Citipower Collection, c1920)

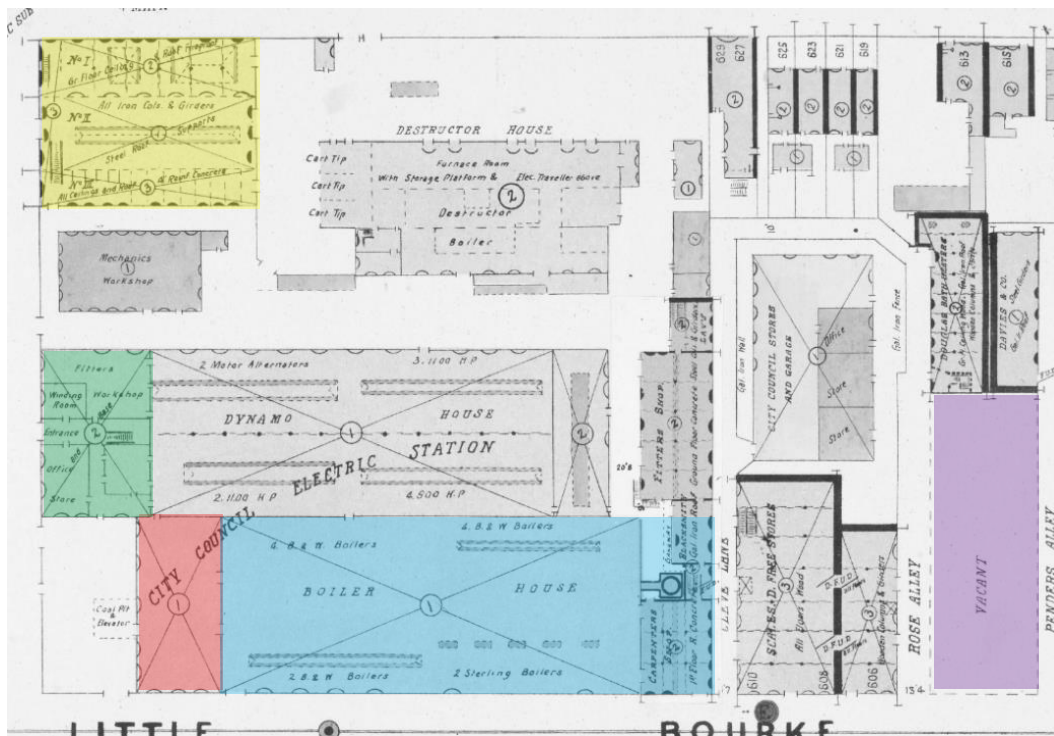


Figure 5. By the latter half of the 1920s, Substation J (shaded yellow) was built on the corner of Spencer and Lonsdale streets. The brick workshops were built on the eastern portion of the site at 620-648 Little Bourke Street (shaded blue). The Offices building (shaded green), the Economiser building (shaded red), and the vacant yard at 602-606 Little Bourke Street (shaded purple) remained unchanged since 1910. (Source: Mahlsted Map Section 1, no 22, 1925 with later additions)

In 1927, a large cast-iron water tank was installed on the immediate north of the Offices building and the Dynamo House. Made in 1888 by J Abbot & Co. in Gateshead, England, the water tank:

*was relocated from the original Hydraulic Power Company No 1 Pumping Station, located adjacent to the Australian Wharf on the Flinders Street Extension. An early and rare example of the use of imported prefabricated cast iron plates, it was installed adjacent to the office buildings and turbine hall, suspended over a laneway' ('Overhead Water Tank' VHD Place ID 11537).*

This laneway off Spencer Street is today known as Watertank Way.

From 1946 to 1952 the City Architect's Office developed plans for new power station buildings for the Electric Supply Department, and by the mid-1950s a number of additions had been made to the MCC Power Station in Spencer Street. Major additions to the complex included the new Engine and Boiler Room adjoined to the austere concrete Office Block (frontages to Lonsdale Street as seen in Figure 7, demolished), a new Store Building (today's 602-606 Little Bourke Street), Oil Storage and Amenities Buildings (frontages to both Little Bourke and Lonsdale streets, demolished) (Elphinstone 1986:12). These new additions replaced many earlier structures, including a group of 1920s brick workshops that were demolished to accommodate extensions to the turbine house. The two-storey brick warehouse on the eastern portion of 620-648 Little Bourke Street is the only surviving 1920s workshop of the group built in Cleve Lane (see Figure 7).

The former Melbourne City Council Stores Building was built in 1949 on the vacant land formerly used by Council as an electric store yard in conjunction with its Spencer Street Power Station electric supply services and meters branch (S&Mc 1942). In November 1949, the Melbourne City Council



called for tenders for building a 'Stores Building', at '600 Little Bourke Street', for the Melbourne City Council Electricity Supply Department (Age 5 November 1939:13). The Melbourne City Council called another tender in December 1949 for the erection and completion of a three-storey steel-framed and reinforced concrete Store Building, to a design from the City Architect's office (Age 14 December 1949:19). The Store Building, also known as the Electric Supply Store, became six-storey, being added with three storeys in 1955. In the 1950s, the site was interchangeably addressed as number 600, 602 or 602-604 Little Bourke Street, and by 1960, it became known as 602-606 Little Bourke Street (S&Mc 1950, 1955 & 1960).

The former Melbourne City Council Power Station in its fully developed state is shown in Figure 7, with extant buildings shown in different shades.



Figure 6. View of the power station buildings along Lonsdale Street, showing the Substation J brick building (with windows bricked in) (far right) and the new 1950s reinforced concrete buildings and tower to the east. (Source: Richards 1957, Museums Victoria [in copyright](#))

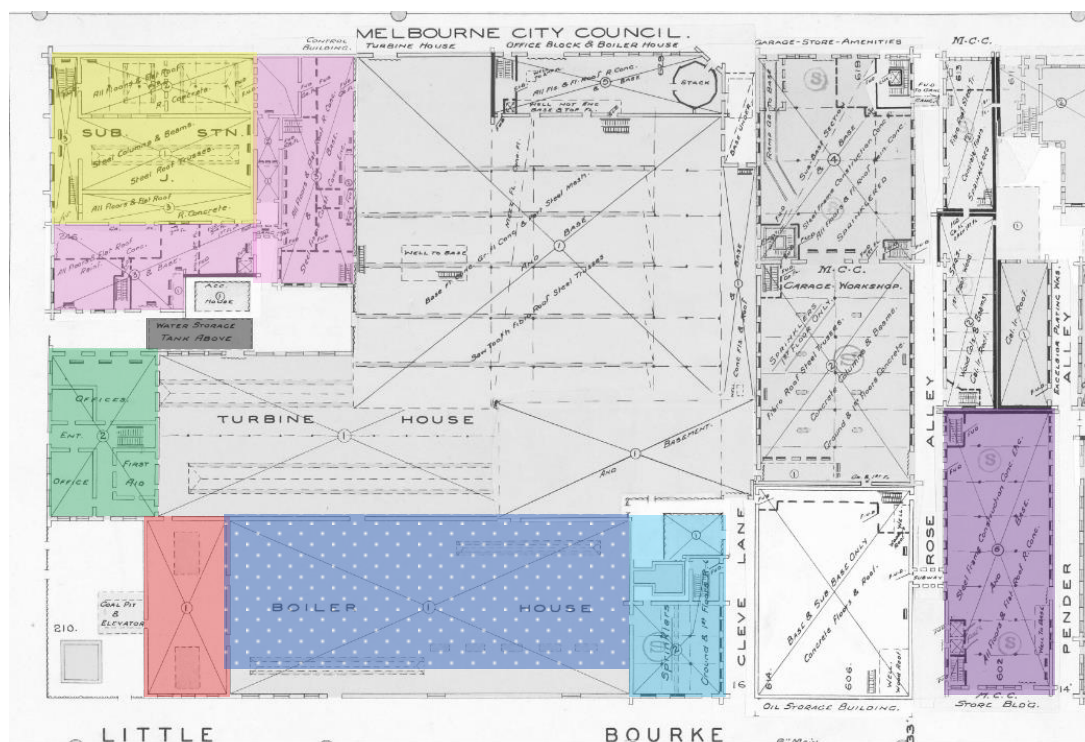


Figure 7. Showing the Melbourne City Spencer Street Power Station in the c1960s. The 602-606 Little Bourke Street building named 'MCC Store Bldg' (purple), the 1925 substation building (blue), the 1985 substation JA and service vehicle yard (dark blue hatching), the Economiser building (red), Offices (green), Substation J (yellow) and reinforced concrete additions to the south and east (pink), and overhead water tank (grey) can all be seen in relation to the other, now lost, buildings that comprised the electricity supply complex. (Source: Mahlstedt Map Section 1, no 22, 1948, with later amendments)

The MCC Power Station in Spencer Street was closed in 1982, and remained largely vacant and derelict for 25 years (Millar 2006). After the closure of the power station, the operation of Substation J continued under the management of the Melbourne City Council Electricity Supply Department.

In 1985 tenders were invited for the 'building demolition and removal of existing load bearing three-storey brick building, removal of heavy engineering equipment and concrete sub-structure' (Age 29 June 1985:159). This referred to the demolition of the 1903 boiler house, which was replaced in 1985 with the extant Substation JA at 620-648 Little Bourke Street (Age 7 August 1985:53). The Substation J (651-669 Lonsdale Street) and the Substation JA (620-648 Little Bourke Street) operated under the ownership of Melbourne City Council in conjunction with the State Electricity Commission of Victoria (SECV) until the privatisation and transfer to CitiPower Ltd in 1998. Both substations today continue operation under the ownership of CitiPower Ltd (CT:V0372 F667).

The Offices building and Economiser building, both built in 1908, remain extant, being incorporated into the recently developed residential tower complex. In May 2006 the large substation site was sold to overseas developers, with asbestos removal and demolition commencing soon after to facilitate redevelopment. The historic tower fronting Lonsdale Street was dismantled in September 2007 and much of the site was cleared by April 2008 (ABC News Online 2007). In 2008-09 the 1950s section of the power station was demolished, as well as many other earlier buildings, including the earliest surviving structure of the MCC Power Station, the 1894 turbine hall behind the Offices building (VHD Place ID B6614).

By May 2012, the 602-606 Little Bourke Street building was in use as the City of Melbourne Archives building, retrofitted with climate and security control measures (Future Melbourne Committee 2012).



In 2012, the building contained 'approximately 10km of records' in the archives occupying the levels from the basement and third floor, and 'a variety of 7000+ [sic] works of art, textiles, photographs, objects, documents, sculptures and fountains' held in the Art and Heritage Collection on the fourth and fifth floor (Future Melbourne Committee 2012:4-5).

## SITE DESCRIPTION

The former Melbourne City Council Power Station has become fragmented through development over time. The remaining buildings constitute a collection of industrial buildings built between 1908-1985, all of which were associated with the site's former use as the Melbourne City Council Power Station.

*Offices building at part of 617-639 Lonsdale Street (Spencer Street frontage)*



Figure 8. The Offices building, built to replace the front part of the 1894 turbine hall in 1908. (Source: Context, January 2020)

The two-storey Offices building, now part of 617-639 Lonsdale Street (Spencer Street frontage), was built in 1908. It is constructed in loadbearing red brickwork (Flemish bond) with free classical detailing favoured by the Victorian Italianate style. The building has had a large apartment tower built to its east. The principal façade and side walls remain extant.

The principal façade facing Spencer Street is symmetrically arranged and is divided into six bays separated by engaged pilasters that terminate at a moulded cornice above which sits a simple straight parapet. At the upper level five evenly spaced, vertically proportioned double hung timber sash windows sit between the pilasters and are distinguished by moulded cement architraves and scroll brackets that support substantial triangular and semi-circular (centre window) pediments. At the ground level four large circular arched windows sit either side of a central entrance door. The windows are fitted with multipaned fixed glazing that appears early and have unpainted basalt sills. The central round arched entry sits beneath a large triangular pediment supported by elaborate scroll brackets.

The remnant brick wall along the building's southern elevation is of brown brick laid in English bond. Utilitarian in detail several original openings remain with extant basalt sills and round (ground floor) and segmental (first floor) arched heads. Along the northern elevation the remnant wall is also of brown brick laid in English bond and is divided into three recessed bays with corbeled tops. Each bay comprises a round arched opening at the ground level with segmented arched windows above. Both side elevations show evidence of repair work to their brick walls.

*Economiser building, at part of 617-639 Lonsdale Street (Little Bourke Street frontage)*

Figure 9. The Economiser Building (earlier known as the Pumping House). (Source: Context, January 2020)

The single-storey Economiser building now part of 617-639 Lonsdale Street (Little Bourke Street frontage) was built in 1908 and is constructed in loadbearing red brickwork laid in English bond. Originally a simple building, rectangular in plan with gabled roof, a residential tower has been built to its north and within its air space above. In spite of the new development, all four original elevations and the original gabled roof form including the elevated roof lantern and internal roof trusses remain intact.

Designed with a temple form the building is distinguished by a prominent rendered cornice and pediment like gable end. Tall round arched windows with multipaned glazing are located along its principal elevation (Little Bourke Street) and remnant western wall and are set within rectangular brick reveals. Along the eastern elevation a single round arched window is set within a round arched reveal.

*CitiPower substation (former Melbourne City Council Substation J and Control Building), 651-669 Lonsdale Street*

Figure 10. Elevations of the CitiPower 'Substation J' at Lonsdale Street (left) and Spencer Street (right). (Source: Context, January 2020)

The CitiPower substation at 651-669 Lonsdale Street, comprises Substation J (1920), the 1950 addition to the south and the 1953 addition to the east (former Control Building).

Substation J is a three-storey brick building constructed in loadbearing red brickwork in English bond. Positioned on the south-east corner of Spencer Street and Lonsdale Street, it demonstrates characteristics of the Federation Free style with its incorporation of stripped back classical elements and use of natural materials. Its principal facades to Spencer Street and Lonsdale Street are divided into equally spaced bays separated by engaged pilasters that terminate at a smooth rendered cornice band with oversized brackets and round arched details that demarcate the buildings edges. A stepped parapet conceals the roof form behind. The original pattern of openings is still legible across both elevations with exposed concrete lintels extant, however, most openings have been bricked in. Some original windows remain along both elevations and are steel framed.

A warehouse building was added to the south of Substation J in 1950. Designed by City of Melbourne engineers, this utilitarian building of unadorned reinforced concrete, features simple steel-framed horizontal strip windows and simple geometric massing that is more typical of the interwar functionalist style which maintained popularity into the years immediately post war. A large mural has recently been painted over the building's Spencer Street façade.

The former Control building was added to the east of Substation J in 1953. Constructed of reinforced concrete and utilitarian in character, this cuboid building has no visible openings along its Lonsdale Street façade and is painted with a mural.



Figure 11. Warehouse building built to the south of Substation J in 1950 (Source: Context 2019)

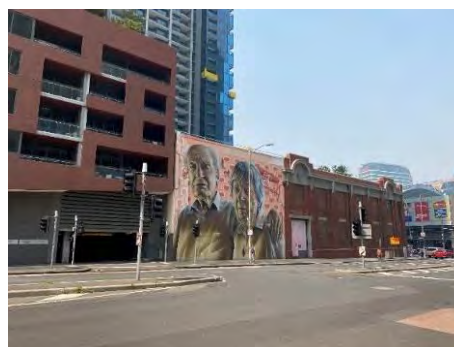


Figure 12. Former Control building built to the east of Substation J in 1953 (Source: Context 2019)

#### *CitiPower Substation JA, 620-648 Little Bourke Street*



Figure 13. CitiPower Substation JA, comprising buildings built shortly after 1925 (left) and in 1985 (right). (Source: Context, January 2020)



The CitiPower Substation JA incorporates two buildings, one built shortly after 1925 and the other in 1985, and an open service area for vehicle access between these buildings. Located on the northern side of Little Bourke Street with a side frontage to Cleve Lane, the 1925 substation is a simple two-storey factory building. Constructed of red face brick laid in English bond, the building has continuous unpainted concrete lintels over the window and door openings at the ground and first floor levels, typical of factory buildings in central Melbourne built in the 1920s. The principal façade fronting Little Bourke Street has a symmetrical two-bay form, with a double gabled parapet surmounted with a simple rendered capping. Within each gable is a circular ventilation opening. The ground floor has a pair of early timber doors on the right-hand side, and on the left, there is a large opening with louvres and external security bars. The brickwork below the window is not original, suggesting that the opening was originally a wide doorway that has been infilled. At the first-floor level there are four identical large window openings. On the eastern (Cleve Lane) elevation, the ground floor is punctuated by an irregular pattern of openings, including two windows of an identical pattern to those at the Little Bourke Street first floor level, as well as a wide roller shutter and other doorways for loading and unloading, one of which appears to have retained its original steel door. The first floor has five windows, also of the same pattern, as well as a narrow full height opening. Most of the windows are the original multi-pane steel frame windows.

The rear section of the building adjacent to Cleve Lane has been demolished and replaced with a single-storey steel shed, along with the original chimney, probably in 2006 as early works in association with proposed redevelopment of the site.

The service vehicle yard is enclosed by a high wall with a rolling shutter extending eastward from the principal (southern) elevation of the 1985 substation building and terminating at the western wall of the 1925 building.

The two-storey 1985 part of Substation JA is of concrete construction and features references to classical architecture and, like the neighbouring 1908 Economiser building, features a plain face brick-clad upper level plane with concrete-render cornices. Treated like an exaggerated entablature, the upper plane is supported by a series of stylised granite Ionic columns floating from the lower level wall, creating a colonnade-like effect. The precast concrete wall is ruled to create a brickwork effect and currently overpainted with a mural. There is a roller shutter in the ground level entry.

#### *Overhead Water Tank*



Figure 14. The Overhead Water Tank, built 1888 and relocated to this site in c1927. (Source: Context, February 2020)

The Overhead Water Tank is listed on the Victorian Heritage Register (H2117). The Statement of Significance describes the water tank as below.

*The Overhead Water Tank is constructed of prefabricated cast iron panels connected via a series of tie rods and is supported over a laneway on a steel framed structure. The tank is fourteen panels long by 5 panels wide. The side of the tank are two panels high and it is divided internally into three roughly equal compartments. A number of pipes and valves associated with the function of the tank are extant as are a number of valve covers at ground level which are associated with the supply of water and the distribution of high pressure water ('Overhead Water Tank', VHD Place ID 11537).*

*Melbourne City Council Archives (former Store Building), 602-606 Little Bourke Street*



Figure 15. 602-606 Little Bourke Street, built in 1949 and 1955. (Source: Context 2019)

602-606 Little Bourke Street is a six-storey warehouse building with a basement. It was originally built in 1949 with three-storeys. Three additional levels were added in 1955. The building has secondary frontages to Rose Lane to the west and Pender Alley to the east. The building exhibits some characteristics of the interwar Functionalist style, including the horizontal groupings of multi-paned windows divided by rusticated mullions and a continuous vertical pier. The building is of reinforced concrete construction with an exposed concrete finish. The façade has undergone extensive repairs where the surface appears to have spalled. The building terminates in a simple undecorated horizontal parapet.

The principal façade to Little Bourke Street is symmetrical except for a continuous vertical bay of windows at its western end. Original multipane steel framed windows appear to be extant, each frame comprising six horizontally proportioned sashes, one of which is openable. At street level, the façade comprises a large opening at the eastern end with a roller shutter, and a similar width opening to the

left infilled with two modules of vertically proportioned steel frame windows with three sashes to each (one sash has been infilled). The three openings feature unusual recessed corbelled lintels.

The Pender Alley and Rose Lane elevations are of simple exposed concrete, and do not have rusticated mullions. The window openings are of a similar size and proportion to those of the Little Bourke Street façade, with original multipaned steel frame windows.

## INTEGRITY

Although substantial redevelopment of the former power station site has occurred in recent years, as a group the former Melbourne City Council Power Station buildings retain the ability to demonstrate their original purpose as a power station established to generate electricity by the Melbourne City Council. The majority of the buildings' original scale, materiality, form and interrelationships remain legible and demonstrate the site's evolution from the early twentieth century into the postwar era. Individually:

- the two-storey Offices building (1908) fronting Spencer Street has had few changes to the original street elevation. The building's original scale, materiality and form remains clearly legible as a Federation Free Classical building built as offices for the wider former MCC Electrical Power Station complex of buildings. There is a recent tower development built above the Offices building, set back from the original building's facade;
- the single storey Economiser building (1908) fronting Little Bourke Street is largely intact with very few changes visible to original fabric. The building's original scale, materiality and form remain legible as a stripped classical building with a temple form, despite the recent construction of a large apartment tower at the rear. It retains its original fenestration, roof form including roof lantern and internal trusses. There is a recent tower development built above the Economiser building, set back from the street boundary;
- Substation J (1920) at 651-669 Lonsdale Street is largely intact with some changes visible to original or early fabric. The building retains its original scale, materiality and form and whilst some openings have been bricked in, the original pattern and size of fenestrations remain clearly legible. Extensions to the building's south (1950) and east (1953) are both largely intact and provide tangible evidence of the building's ongoing use as part of the former MCC Power Station into the postwar era;
- Substation JA at 620-648 Little Bourke Street, comprising the 1925 building (formerly a workshop) and the 1985 substation building is largely intact. Changes to the 1925 building have occurred to original or early fabric for its subsequent conversion and ongoing use as a substation. The building retains its original scale, materials and form. The 1985 substation building is highly intact to its 1985 scale, materials and form as a late twentieth century substation commissioned by the MCC Electricity Supply Department. The ground level precast concrete wall of the 1985 substation is overpainted with mural;
- the former Store Building at 602-606 Little Bourke Street is largely intact with few changes visible to the building in its six-storey 1955 form. The building retains its 1955 scale, materiality and form as a warehouse building, and also retains most of its original fenestration and steel frame windows.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The earliest substations were small scaled buildings with their importance not necessarily reflected in their design. With the significant expansion of electricity supply in the interwar period efforts were made to produce building designs that reflected their location and the importance of their function. Electrical substations across Melbourne show a variety of architectural styles, generally reflecting the civic and urban design concerns of the municipal electricity supply departments, the earlier electric companies and the role of the SECV. Pavilion styles proliferate in parkland areas of the Domain and the Fitzroy Gardens. Substations in urban streetscapes tend to exhibit more austere modernist features, or a simpler functional industrial aesthetic or present as a simple gable roofed 'shed'. Even in the more austere examples there is generally brickwork detail and care taken in their massing and composition (Biosis, 2007:19-25).

While many small-scale substations were erected across the City of Melbourne, larger scale substations of two or more storeys are mostly found outside the central Melbourne. These include the 1920s Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramway Board substations at 214-222 Queensberry Street, Carlton (VHR H2325, HO1135) and 67-69 Clarke Street, Southbank (Interim HO1223), as well as the North Melbourne substation at the National Electricity Substation in Arden Street, Kensington. These were erected to supplement electricity for the railway and tramway services from and to the City of Melbourne, rather than for the supply of electricity to the municipality.

There are no other examples of large power stations comprising multiple buildings and built for a similar purpose within the City of Melbourne.

The following examples are all former Melbourne City Council substations in central Melbourne, currently operating as CitiPower substations. These examples are comparable with some of the subject buildings, being of a similar style, construction date and/or original use. The images and descriptions are provided by CoM Maps unless stated otherwise, with images dated c2000 or later.

*Substation, 1-3 Evans Lane, 1913 (Contributory within interim HO1297 Little Lonsdale Street Precinct – Recommended in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review)*

Built in 1913 by builders Reynolds Bros to designs by architect W Rain, this warehouse was converted to an electrical substation in 1928, as part of a program by the City of Melbourne to supply new substations in the 1920s. It continues to operate as a substation today.



Figure 16. 1-3 Evans Lane, constructed in 1913.



*CitiPower (formerly Melbourne City Council Substation), 23-25 George Parade, c1938 (Interim HO1248 – Recommended as significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review)*

23-25 George Parade was substantially altered in the interwar period as part of its substation conversion, in response to the expansion of electricity supply and distribution in Melbourne. It still operates as a substation.



Figure 17. 23-25 George Parade, constructed in 1938. (Source: Context 2017)

*CitiPower (formerly Melbourne City Council Substation), 10-14 Park Street, 1928 (Interim HO1257– Recommended as significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review)*

10-14 Park Street is one of several small scale electrical substations built in the interwar period as part of the expansion of electricity supply and distribution and operated for over 60 years as part of the Melbourne City Council's electricity supply department. It still operates as a substation.



Figure 18. 10-14 Park Street, constructed in 1928. (Source: Context 2017)

*CitiPower (formerly Melbourne City Council Substation), 11-27 Tavistock Place, 1927 (Interim HO1249 – recommended as significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review)*

11-27 Tavistock Place is a large electrical substation built by the Melbourne City Council Electricity Supply Department in 1927 as part of an upgrade of electrical supply and distribution. It is one of several substations built at the edges of the Hoddle Grid which facilitated the residential, commercial and industrial expansion of the city.



Figure 19. 11-27 Tavistock Place, constructed in 1927. (Source: Context 2017)

Built as part of the City of Melbourne's programme for provision of electricity services, the above HO-listed interwar substations are comparable with the Substation J (1920) and JA (c1925), both of which supplemented the Council's electricity scheme to meet the rapidly increasing demands for electric supply in the interwar period. The overall materiality and characteristic elements seen in Substation J, such as equally spaced bays separated by engaged pilasters, a smooth rendered cornice band with oversized brackets, and round arched details, are consistent with the architectural character of later interwar substations built by Melbourne City Council. The 1927 substation at 11-27 Tavistock Place is highly comparable with the Substation J, in this respect. Similar oversized brackets and rendered cornice are also used in the 1928 substation at 23-25 George Parade.

The c1925 Substation JA is more closely comparable to the 1928 substation at 10-14 Park Street and the 1913 warehouse building converted to a substation at 1-3 Evans Lane. The later c1938 substation at 23-25 George Parade has some elements similar to the now-demolished turbine house building, which existed in Lonsdale Street in the former MCC Power Station site. In terms of its materials and use of elements, the 1920s brick building exhibits design features typical of early twentieth century warehouse buildings. Consistent with other industrial buildings from this period, the windows feature a ventilation system where the bottom row of sashes is angled back and the gap above covered in mesh to provide a measure of permanent ventilation.

The group of surviving structures of the former Melbourne City Council Power Station is distinguished from the above examples of single substations in central Melbourne. First established in 1894, the Melbourne City Council Power Station was the primary location for the City of Melbourne's Municipal Electricity Undertakings (MEUs) commenced in 1897. The extant group of buildings on the site dating from 1908 to 1985 remain as physical evidence of the City's undertaking to expand the electricity supply for the municipality.

## 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 amendment to HO737. The former Melbourne City Council Power Station is recommended as an individual heritage place.

Amend HO737 (204-240 Spencer Street, Melbourne) to reflect the following changes:

- Apply HO737 to the former Melbourne City Council Power Station at (Part of) 617-639 Lonsdale Street, 651-669 Lonsdale Street, 602-606 Little Bourke Street, and 620-648 Little Bourke Street Melbourne
- Change the entry in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay to 'Former Melbourne City Council Power Station, (Part of) 617-639 Lonsdale Street, 651-669 Lonsdale Street, 602-606 Little Bourke Street, and 620-648 Little Bourke Street Melbourne'.
- Amend the map for HO737 to match the changes noted above.
- Retain HO950 'Overhead Water Tank, Spencer Street, Melbourne' (VHR H2117).

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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- Victorian Heritage Database (VHD), 'Former Melbourne Power Station', National Trust Place ID B6614, accessed online 5 April 2019.

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**PREVIOUS STUDIES**

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**Central Activities District  
Conservation Study 1985**      C (619-629 Lonsdale Street)  
C (629-669 Lonsdale Street)

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 1993**      C (619-629 Lonsdale Street)  
C (629-669 Lonsdale Street)

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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 Melbourne City Council Power Station

PS ref no: HO737







### What is significant?

The former Melbourne City Council Power Station buildings, (part of) 617-639 Lonsdale Street, 651-669 Lonsdale Street, 602-606 Little Bourke Street, and 620-648 Little Bourke Street Melbourne, located across the block bounded by Little Bourke, Lonsdale and Spencer streets, built between 1908 and 1985.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include:

- CitiPower substation (Substation J) at 651-669 Lonsdale Street, which comprises the brick substation from 1920, and the reinforced concrete additions to the south from 1950s and to the east in 1953 (former Control Building);
- External walls to the façade and north and south elevations of the Office Building, now part of 617-639 Lonsdale Street (with frontages to Spencer Street);
- Economiser Building, now part of 617-639 Lonsdale Street (with frontages to Little Bourke Street), built in 1908;
- Overhead Water Tank, fashioned out of prefabricated cast-iron panels in 1888 and relocated to this site in 1927;
- Substation JA at 620-648 Little Bourke Street, which comprises the post-1925 substation (built as a workshop and later converted to a substation) adjacent to Cleve Lane and a large substation constructed in 1985 on the site of the former 1903 Boiler House; and
- Melbourne City Council Archives building (former Store Building) at 602-606 Little Bourke Street.

Recent changes, including the interventions to the original fabric during redevelopment works after 2006 and associated apartment towers, are not significant.

### How it is significant?

The former Melbourne City Council Power Station buildings, (part of) 617-639 Lonsdale Street, 651-669 Lonsdale Street, 602-606 Little Bourke Street, and 620-648 Little Bourke Street Melbourne, are of historic, rarity and representative significance to the City of Melbourne. The overhead water tank (VHR H2117) is of historic, rarity and technical significance to the City of Melbourne.

## Why it is significant?

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The former Melbourne City Council Power Station buildings, built between 1908 and 1985, are historically significant for their association with the development of Melbourne's electricity supply network established in 1894 and for their ability to demonstrate the provision of electricity to metropolitan Melbourne by Melbourne City Council from 1894 into the early 1980s. In 1894, Melbourne City Council was the first metropolitan council in Victoria to establish its own electricity supply and distribution network, which in turn facilitated the residential, commercial and industrial expansion of the city. The form, scale and fabric of the individual buildings provides physical evidence of the system's expansion during the early decades of the twentieth century into the postwar era and a range of the power station's component parts.

The surviving physical fabric of the former power station site is significant as rare surviving evidence of the infrastructure built by the Melbourne City Council Electricity Supply Department as part of Melbourne's expanding electricity network, and as a substantial remnant of the former Melbourne City Council Power Station, which was closed in 1982. Following the closure of the power station, the extant Substation J (651-669 Lonsdale Street) and Substation JA (620-648 Little Bourke Street) operated under the ownership of Melbourne City Council in conjunction with the State Electricity Commission of Victoria (SECV) until the privatisation of the electricity industry saw it transferred to CitiPower Ltd in 1998. Substation JA represents the continued use of the site for the supply of electricity into the 1980s, before the privatisation of the electricity industry. (Criteria A and B)

The overhead water tank at the former MCC Power Station is of historic significance as the only surviving element of the original nineteenth-century system that generated and supplied hydraulic power across the City of Melbourne until the 1960s. (Criteria A and B)

The former Melbourne City Council Power Station site comprises individual buildings that are significant as representative examples of their type. Substation J (part of 651-699 Lonsdale Street), a three-storey brick substation built in 1920, is a representative example of a Melbourne City Council substation designed by its own architects' branch. Utilitarian in its design, it incorporates stripped back classical elements and natural materials. Details used in Substation J are consistent with the architectural character of other later interwar substations built by Melbourne City Council. The post-1925 CitiPower substation at the eastern part of 620-648 Little Bourke Street is a largely intact example of an interwar factory building, consistent in form, scale and materiality with the many low-scale warehouse/factory buildings of similar utilitarian character. The lack of superfluous decoration reinforces the building's disciplined industrial aesthetic. (Criterion D)

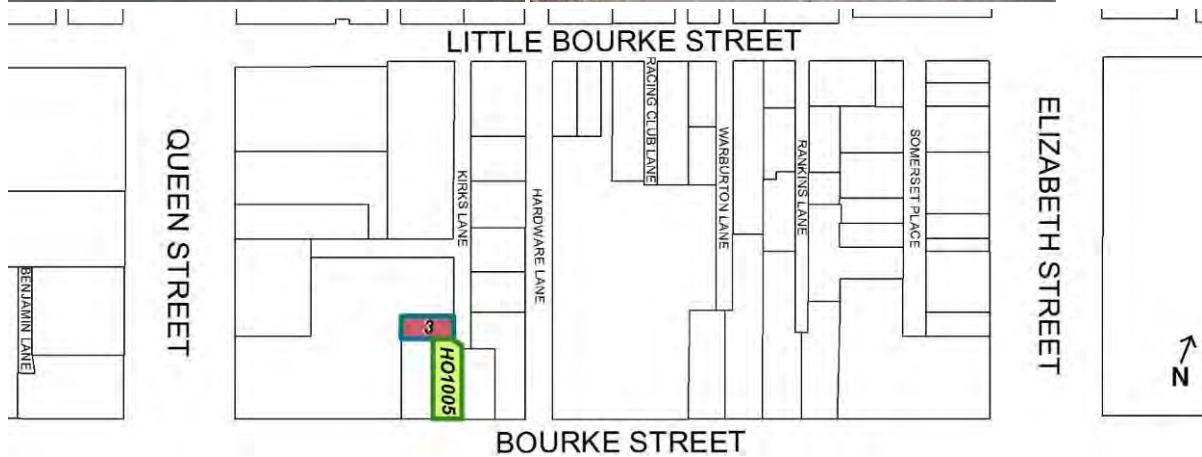
The overhead water tank at the former MCC Power Station is of scientific (technical) significance for its early and rare use of prefabricated cast iron panels. This type of construction allowed for its reuse at the former MCC Power Station site, albeit at a reduced scale to suit the different pumping arrangements. (Criterion F)

## 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 Gothic Chambers and warehouse
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	418-420 Bourke Street and 3 Kirks Lane Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	101184, 631820



SURVEY DATE: January 2019, January 2020		SURVEY BY: Context	
<b>HERITAGE INVENTORY</b>	H7822-1028	<b>EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY</b>	Yes – HO1005
<b>PLACE TYPE</b>	Individual Heritage Place	<b>PROPOSED CATEGORY</b>	Significant
<b>DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:</b>	Charles D'Ebro	<b>FORMER GRADE</b>	Significant, C
		<b>BUILDER:</b>	H W McMullen
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	1890

## THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations.	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here.
HISTORIC THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
5 Building a Commercial City	5.5 Building a manufacturing capacity

## LAND USE

HISTORIC LAND USE	
Archaeological block no: 28	Inventory no: 440
Character of Occupation: Residential	
Land sale detail not provided. Current building is four storeys built 1890-91.	
1866 Cox	Building on site
1880 Panorama	Two-storey building
1888 Mahlstedt	One-storey building (oyster saloon)
1905/6 Mahlstedt	Four-storey building
THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Warehouses
1920s	Warehouses
1960s	Warehouses

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place, extending HO1005, 418-420 Bourke Street, Melbourne, to include the Gothic Chambers warehouse at 3 Kirks Lane, Melbourne.

**Extent of overlay:** Refer to map showing recommend revised curtilage of HO1005.

## SUMMARY

The former Gothic Chambers and warehouse are a detached pair of late Victorian, four-storey brick warehouses, built to a design by architect Charles D'Ebro in 1890. The pair were built at the same time and were occupied by various merchants and manufacturers including Alexander Morrison's saddlery, which occupied the ground floor shops from 1890 through to the 1970s. The Gothic Chambers warehouse in Kirks Lane continues to be used as a warehouse.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

### Building a commercial city

#### *Building a manufacturing capacity*

From the 1850s, the Yarra River and the docks west of Swanston Street were in essence the 'lifeline' of the city. Port facilities and large warehouses were built in this area to serve shipping interests (Context 2012:39-40).

By the 1880s, the areas of Flinders Street, King Street, Little Bourke Street and Spencer Street comprised multiple mercantile offices, produce stores and large-scale bonded stores, including Zander's Bonded Stores and Coles Bonded Stores. As Melbourne developed through the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, so did her manufacturing industry, much of which was established in close proximity to existing warehouses and stores.

Although affected by World War One in the period 1914-1918, by 1921, 38 per cent of Melbourne's workers were employed in industry with almost all new factory jobs in Australia between 1921 and 1947 created in Sydney and Melbourne. The growth of manufacturing, assisted by a new federal tariff in 1921, stimulated urban growth and by the end of the 1920s, Melbourne's population had reached one million people. The expansion of new sectors in the manufacturing industry was maintained by buoyant levels of domestic demand (Marsden 2000:29; Dingle 2008).

In the first decades of the twentieth century, the demand for residential development declined in central Melbourne as many residents moved out of the city to the suburbs, and the booming retail and manufacturing sectors rapidly took up available city properties (Marsden 2000:29-30). Multi-storey factory, workshop and warehouse buildings, some designed by architects, increasingly took over the city.

Development in the city slowed with the Great Depression that commenced in October 1929 and continued through the early 1930s. Because of a lack of finance over this period, instead of new construction, some city buildings were substantially re-modelled to create new office, commercial and industrial spaces, and also for use by government.

From the 1930s, like the rest of Australia, an increasing proportion of the city's workforce took up jobs in manufacturing, an industry that led Australia's recovery from the economic depression at a time when, the *Encyclopedia of Melbourne* notes, a

*steep rise in tariffs, devaluation of the Australian pound, falling wages and electricity costs all made local producers far more competitive internationally. Textiles benefited first, then the metals industries and engineering took over as pacemakers* (Dingle 2008).

After being the centre of manufacturing in Australia in the 1920s, Melbourne's importance in this regard began to decline. During the 1940s many city factories and warehouses were left empty or converted for other uses (Context 2012:53).

## SITE HISTORY

The site of 418-420 Bourke Street and 3 Kirks Lane, Melbourne, is part of Crown Allotment 2 of Block 20, purchased by Sylvester J Browne, pastoralist, in 1837 (McMullen 2017; *Sydney Morning Herald* 5 August 1915:6, CoMMaps).



From the mid-nineteenth century, the block bounded by Bourke, Elizabeth, Little Bourke and Queen streets, including the subject site, was associated with the horse industry. From the 1850s to the 1880s, the subject site was occupied by two timber buildings, between two horse bazaars fronting Bourke Street (Mahlsted Map 1, no 20, 1888). The laneway today known as Kirks Lane was previously known as Vinge Alley and Vengeance Alley. The lane was renamed by 1907 after James Bowie (J B) Kirk, a member of the Melbourne Racing Club, who in 1840 established Kirk's Horse and Carriage Bazaar in Bourke Street between Swanston and Queen streets, accessed from the rear via Racing Club Lane and Kirks Lane (Zhang 2008).

The Gothic Chambers (also known as Gothic Buildings), a four-storey brick shop and warehouse building at 418-420 Bourke Street, and the four-storey face brick warehouse with a basement at 3 Kirks Lane, were constructed in 1890, at the height of Melbourne's building boom. The owner, City Property Company, commissioned the eminent architect Charles A D'Ebro and builder H W McMullen to erect a group of four buildings including the subject buildings (MCC registration no 4333, as cited in AAI, record no 73860). The 1890 construction also involved two now-demolished three-storey warehouses in Kirks Lane. This pair later became associated with the nearby Clarke's Buildings (demolished in the 1960s) at 426-434 Bourke Street, a complex of office and warehouse buildings built in 1886 to a design by D'Ebro for The City Property Company (Mahlstedt Map section 1, no 13, 1925).

The City Property Company Pty Ltd was formed on 25 August 1886 during Melbourne's land boom. The company heavily invested in building development in the 1880s and early 1890s at a time of frenetic speculation. The company held several key city properties, including the Clarke's Buildings in Bourke Street; the Lane Buildings in Flinders Lane; the Block Arcade between Collins Street and Elizabeth Street; and Georges Department Store in Collins Street. The original shareholders of the company were Orlando Fenwick, Andrew Lyell, Robert Mailer, R G Benson (former secretary of the Metropolitan Deposit Bank) and J A Howden, who was the first secretary of the company (*Argus* 13 December 1921:7; *Macleay Argus* 21 September 1889:3). Another major shareholder by 1892 was land boom speculator and politician B J Fink (*Weekly Times* 3 December 1892:15). The company went into voluntarily liquidation in 1924 (*Age* 7 March 1924:16).

The Gothic Chambers building comprised two ground level shops known as 418 and 420 Bourke Street, and three levels of warehousing spaces above. Moving into 418 Bourke Street by 1892, Alexander Morrison, saddler, was the first tenant at Gothic Chambers, and became the longest-associated business until it vacated the premises in the early 1970s. During Melbourne's economic depression in the 1890s, most of the rentable spaces in the Gothic Chambers, apart from the ground-level shop at no 418 and its associated warehouse space remained vacant, housing short-term tenants intermittently. Some of the short-term tenants included Everard Brothers, tea merchants, who occupied 420 Bourke Street between 1894 and 1898, and wine merchants Berclaz & Suffern, who occupied the subject Kirks Lane warehouse from 1896 and 1898 (RB 1891, 1892, 1893, 1894, 1896, 1898 & 1900; S&Mc 1896 & 1900).

The buildings were advertised for lease in 1894, with descriptions being provided as below:

*TO LET, at exceptionally moderate rental, those magnificent centrally situated premises known as Gothic Buildings, Nos. 418 and 420 Bourke Street, between Queen and Elizabeth streets.*

*Any alterations will be made to suit tenant. In addition to the fine Bourke Street frontage, it contains three large flats, 58 ft by 23 ft, with a right of way to Little Bourke Street. Being in the heart of the city, it is highly suitable for wholesale or large retail business of any description.*

*Also, at rear of this building, warehouse of four flats, with hoist. Rent nominal to suitable tenant. (Argus 3 March 1894:7).*

By 1896, Alfred Joseph, director of Joseph & Co, financiers, acquired the Gothic Chambers and the rear warehouse at today's 3 Kirks Lane (RB 1896).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Gothic Chambers and warehouse became fully occupied. By 1900, Alexander Morrison's saddlery was operating from both ground-level shops at 418 and 420 Bourke Street. By 1905, the first and second levels of the Gothic Chambers were occupied by Alfred C Seidel, lithographic printer, with the top level being used by painting and art teacher I Cohen. By 1907, all three upper levels were being used by A C Seidel's printery (S&Mc 1905 & 1907; RB 1907).

Around the same time, the Kirks Lane warehouse was shared by a number of manufacturers including Parker & Mitchell, horse collage makers, in the basement; T Crosby, paper ruler and book binder on the ground level; Fraser & Jenkinson, printers on the first and second levels, and Bennie & Pelzer's 'The Mountford Press' on the third level (RB 1907 & 1910; S&Mc 1905 & 1907). By 1910, the whole building at 3 Kirks Lane was occupied by James A Newton & Co's electrical engineering workshops (S&Mc 1911; RB 1910; *Argus* 30 September 2011). J A Newton & Co operated its retail business from the six-storey building at 380-382 Bourke Street (demolished) (*Age* 11 November 1911:9).

In 1911, the property at 418-420 Bourke Street and 3 Kirks Lane, then part of the estate of late Alfred Joseph, was advertised for sale. The long-term tenant of the Gothic Chambers A Morrison acquired the property in October 1911 (*Herald* 2 October 1911:4; *Age* 5 October 1911:8; *Age* 11 November 1911:9).

After the acquisition, the two ground-level shops were merged into a single floor space for the use by A Morrison (Mahlstedt Map section 1, no 13, 1910 & 1925). A Morrison continued operating his saddlery in the ground-level until the early 1970s (S&Mc 1970 & 1975). The Gothic Chambers houses a retail business today (CoMMaps).

The Kirks Lane warehouse was occupied by J A Newton & Co (taken over by Z W Garrington & Son in 1912) until at least 1923 (*Age* 12 September 1923:4). In 1915 Peacock & Moore, furniture manufacturers, used part of 3 Kirks Lane as storage (S&Mc 1915). More recently, the building was used for E C Electrical Pty Ltd and despatch for R Ball Pty Ltd in 1970-74 (S&Mc 1970 and 1974). The warehouse building continues as a storage facility today (CoMMaps).

#### *Charles A D'Ebro, architect*

Charles Abraham D'Ebro (1850-1920) was a Boom-period architect whose buildings were marked by eclecticism and self-conscious cultural sophistication. Born in London, D'Ebro studied civil engineering being articled in 1873 before emigrating to Adelaide in 1876 to take up a position with the South Australia (SA) Railways. Moving to Melbourne in the 1880s, he entered a partnership with the



architect and engineer John H Grainger. Typically for the period, the buildings they designed were influenced by French Renaissance sources, as well as borrowing from United States architecture. Designing significant municipal buildings, the partnership flourished in the first half of the 1880s, but was dissolved in 1885, as a result of Grainger's excessive drinking and erratic behaviour (Logan 2012:189).

D'Ebro subsequently established his own practice and designed new buildings and additions in several prominent buildings. Notable works include: Prahran Market (1891), Prahran Town Hall (1888-90), Janet Clarke Hall, the University of Melbourne (1890), Wool Exchange Building, Collins Street (1891, in collaboration with Richard Speight), and a number of large houses in Malvern and Toorak (Logan 2012:189).

By 1916, D'Ebro took his long-time assistant W T Meldrum into partnership. The partnership was known as D'Ebro, Meldrum & Wagstaff and, after D'Ebro's death, D'Ebro, Mackenzie & Meldrum (Logan 2012:189).

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

418-420 Bourke Street and 3 Kirks Lane forms an L-shaped parcel, with the former Gothic Chambers having its primary frontage to Bourke Street. The Kirks Lane warehouse is a separate building located at the rear of the Bourke Street site, fronting Kirks Lane, off Little Bourke Street between Elizabeth and Queen streets.

The former Gothic Chambers is a narrow-fronted four-storey loadbearing face brick warehouse building built in 1890. Designed by the eminent architect Charles D'Ebro, the building features a distinctive façade with Venetian Gothic, or Gothic Revival, elements and other details inspired by broader medieval architecture. A transverse gable roof sits behind a gabled parapet with corbel table and arcade and pointed-arched openings on either side of the gable end. The letters 'CPC' (City Property Company) are entwined on a moulded cement shield between a pair of equilaterally arched windows. Below the parapet, the third-floor features four narrow openings. At the first and second floors, three pointed-arched openings are set between pilasters with decorative capping and base at the building's edges. Fine detailing to the façade includes rendering over the windows debossed with a leaf motif, a band of brickwork laid in chequerboard pattern between the first and second floors (Figure 20), a Romanesque inspired frieze within the iron balustrade and on post moulding, and splayed or chamfered edges of the openings. On the ground level, there are two pilasters with simple capital, finished in painted render.

All timber double-hung sash windows appear to be original. A cantilever canopy has been added, and the ground floor shopfront features modern glazing.

The former Gothic Chambers rear (north) elevation evidences the building's past industrial use, featuring a highly utilitarian design with minimal use of decorative elements that are repeated in its warehouse in Kirks Lane. 3 Kirks Lane is a hip roofed four-storey warehouse of loadbearing face brick laid in English bond. There is a metal staircase connecting the two buildings (partially seen in Figure 21). The Kirks Lane elevations of both buildings display typical utilitarian characteristics of late nineteenth and early twentieth century warehouses.

The rear elevation of the Gothic Chambers is asymmetrical, featuring a wider bay with loading doors on the eastern side and two narrower bays with windows on the western side. Two loading doors on the first and second floors have been extended vertically, resulting in the loss of voussoirs. A central

doorway on the ground floor survives, and westernmost window on the first floor have been extended and converted to a doorway with a modern metal door. All other openings on this elevation have been bricked in or boarded up. A timber hoist survives below the parapet level above the loading doors for lifting and loading and unloading of goods.

The Kirks Lane warehouse has a symmetrical façade with three bays. It shows minimal changes to its exterior. The central bay is wider, at each level there is a pair of full height glazed timber loading doors, with suspended loading platforms at the first and third floor levels (there is evidence of a similar platform at the second floor). Above the loading doors, there is a projecting timber hoist beam. The narrower bays on each side have timber double-hung sash windows with a flat arch of three courses of brick voussoirs. The ground floor is raised above the street about 1.2m. On the southern (side) elevation, there is a pair of full height timber doors at each level.

The rear elevation of the Gothic Chambers and the Kirks Lane warehouse share similar elements such as a plain horizontal parapet with a brick corbelled bracket on the edges. All of the door and window openings are set deep within the thick brick walls, and curved corner bricks are used for the reveals at the bay with loading doors. Window openings to both buildings have cement-rendered brick sills.

The remnant brick corbelled bracket on the right-hand side (northern) edge of the second floor of 3 Kirks Lane building indicates the existence of the three-storey Clarke's Buildings warehouse (demolished during the 1960s, see Figure 22) to the immediate north of the subject site.



Figure 20. Detailing to the Bourke Street façade, including the rendering over the windows debossed with a leaf motif and a band of brickwork laid in chequerboard pattern between the first and second floors. (Source: Context, January 2020)



Figure 21. On the left is the rear (northern) elevation of 418-420 Bourke Street, and on the right is the front (eastern) elevation of 3 Kirks Lane. (Source: Context, January 2019)



Figure 22. Note the remnant corbelled bracket on the northern (RHS) edge of the second floor of 3 Kirks Lane. (source: Context, January 2019)

## INTEGRITY

The Gothic Chambers at 418-420 Bourke Street is highly intact with few changes visible to the original or early fabric. The Bourke Street elevation retains its distinctive Venetian Gothic design, with key original ornamental elements surviving. Its rear (north) elevation has more changes, including some changes to opening sizes and the loss of all original windows and doors. The original pattern of openings mostly survives on both primary and rear elevations. Changes include the alterations to the ground floor shopfronts on the Bourke Street elevation and enlarged openings and brick in-fills on the rear elevation.



The warehouse at 3 Kirks Lane is highly intact with very few changes visible to original fabric. The building retains its original pattern of openings, timber windows and doors and hip roof, as well as other original warehouse features including the central projecting hoist beam. Its continued use as a storage facility contributes to the integrity of the place.

Both buildings retain their original materiality, form and scale. Overall, as a single place, 418-420 Bourke Street and 3 Kirks Lane is of very high integrity.

### COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

In central Melbourne, there were a group of Gothic Revival style buildings built in the mid- to late Victorian period, however the popularity of the emerging Gothic or Medieval Revival style was cut off by the financial crash of the early 1890s. On the City of Melbourne's HO, the examples of mid- to late Victorian buildings designed in Gothic Revival style are predominantly built in the period between 1880 and 1893, for financial institutions and organisations. The following examples are comparable with the former Gothic Chambers mainly for a similar style and/or creation date. The images and descriptions are provided by CoM Maps unless stated otherwise, with images dating from c2000 or later.

*Former Melbourne Tramway & Omnibus Co, 669-675 Bourke Street, 1890 (VHR H0785; HO553)*

669-675 Bourke Street was constructed in 1891 for the Melbourne Tramway & Omnibus Company to a design by the architects Twentyman & Askew in Gothic Revival style.



Figure 23. 669-675 Bourke Street, built in 1890.

*Former Bourke Street West Police Station, 621-633 Bourke Street, 1889 (VHR H0655; HO550, Significant in HO501 Bourke West Precinct)*

The two-storey brick and bluestone building consisting of the original station, watchhouse, barracks, cell block and bluestone paved marshalling yard. It was designed by S E Bindley of the Public Works Department in the Gothic Revival style and built in 1889. The building was refurbished and converted to a restaurant/bar in 1980.



Figure 24. 621-633 Bourke Street, built in 1889.

The key examples of the Gothic Revival style buildings erected in central Melbourne are generally of a larger scale and predominantly purpose-built for financial institutions or large organisations, who were mostly the owner-occupiers of the buildings. These include the Melbourne City Building at 112-118 Elizabeth Street, 1888 (VHR H0437; HO617), the ANZ Bank at 376-392 Collins Street, 1883-1887 (VHR H0034; HO604) and the former Safe Deposit Building at 88-92 Queen Street, 1890 (VHR H0451; HO451). These three examples and the above examples are VHR-listed and display a very high level of ornamentation to their façades. The subject building is most comparable with the former Melbourne Tramway & Omnibus Co, 669-675 Bourke Street, or the former Bourke Street West Police Station, 621-633 Bourke Street, which display a more paired back application of medieval elements than the highly ornate financial buildings.

Unlike all the above examples, the former Gothic Chambers was built in an industrial area near the famous Kirks' Horse Bazaar as an investment property of the City Property Company. It is distinguished for its long-term industrial use and association with Melbourne's small-scale manufacturers.

The construction of small-scale shops and industrial buildings was an important aspect of development in central Melbourne, especially during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Early manufacturing and wholesaling premises in central Melbourne were often low in scale and built to a major street with access from minor streets and/or laneways to facilitate the movement of material into and out of the building. In central Melbourne, some early businesses established extensive complexes or clusters of buildings built to accommodate expanding businesses. Such complexes often expanded gradually. As the acquisition of single large plots of land was usually not viable in central Melbourne, expanding businesses developed new buildings on adjoining or nearby land that became available or on land they already owned but used as yards. Buildings with street-frontages were often used as a main office or retail space, and generally had more ornate façades than laneway frontages and rear buildings.

The former Gothic Chambers and warehouse illustrate a type of building complex associated with manufacturing and wholesaling, that was once common in central Melbourne but is now unusual. On the City of Melbourne's HO, the examples of mid- to late Victorian buildings formerly part of manufacturing or wholesaling complexes include the following examples. These are comparable for a similar style, use, type, scale, location and/or creation date. The images and descriptions are provided by CoM Maps unless stated otherwise, with images dating from c2000 or later.

*Former Thomas Warburton Pty Ltd complex, 365-367 Little Bourke Street (HO1052)*

The former Thomas Warburton complex is part of a larger complex developed in stages in 1865, 1887 and 1912. 365-367 Little Bourke Street is a three-storey building comprised of ground floor retail area, upper-floor warehousing spaces and two internally divided warehouses to the rear. It was built in 1887 for Thomas Warburton Pty Ltd, a prominent ironmongery business in the industrial area near the Kirks Horse Bazaar.



Figure 25. 365-367 Little Bourke Street, built in 1887, showing the front elevation (left) and rear warehouses (right). (Source: Context, January 2020)

*Edward Keep & Co warehouse, 377-381 Lonsdale Street (HO716)*

Edward Keep & Co warehouse is a four-storey rendered brick warehouse designed by Twentyman & Askew and built for Edward Keep in 1889 by Waring & Rowden. Mr Keep was the principal of the iron mongering firm Edward Keep & Co. This firm specialised in the importation of carriage materials and agricultural implements. It was rebuilt later that year. It was refurbished and subdivided in 1987.



Figure 26. 377-381 Lonsdale Street constructed 1889.

*Schuhkraft & Co warehouse, 130-132 Flinders Street, 1885 (HO1036)*

Schuhkraft & Co warehouse is a five-storey cement rendered brick former warehouse designed by William Henry Ellerker in the Italian High Renaissance Revival style and built by Charles Butler in



1885 for the printers and stationers Schuhkraft & Co. It was refurbished, converted and subdivided into residential units with ground level retail in 1995.



Figure 27. 130-132 Flinders Street constructed 1885.

*Penman & Dalziel's warehouse, 4-6 Goldie Place, 1888 (HO1044, HO1205 Guildford & Hardware Laneways Precinct)*

Former brick warehouses on a bluestone base with a basement. Designed by Alfred Dunn and built by William Thomas Hosking & Sons in 1888 for the furniture makers John Penman and William John Dalziel. Used by various companies as a warehouse until 1951 when the printers Kenneth James Property Limited purchased the property and converted it into a print works. After being sold in 2001, it was refurbished and converted to a gymnasium.



Figure 28. Penman & Dalziel's warehouse group, 4-6 Goldie Place, built in 1887-8.

*23-25 Niagara Lane, 1887 (HO726, HO1205 Guildford & Hardware Laneways Precinct)*

A group of four three-storey brick warehouses. Designed by George De Lacy Evans and built in 1887. Still largely intact and includes original hoist beams and loading doors. Refurbished and sub-divided into two residential units in 1994.



Figure 29. 23-25 Niagara Lane, built in 1887.

The former Gothic Chambers and warehouse are a pair of buildings that were established as part of the industrial development of the block bound by Bourke, Elizabeth, Queen and Little Bourke streets. This area was known for horse bazaars, ironmongery and hardware merchants from the 1840s. With the expansion of the manufacturing capacity of Melbourne during the boom period in the 1880s and early 1890s, many small-scale mercantile and/or manufacturing premises were erected in the area, replacing earlier buildings. The above HO-listed examples represent similar type of buildings built in nearby areas during this period.

Whilst the use of Gothic style elements sets apart the subject site from many contemporary examples, its function and form represent the warehouse typology once common across the Hoddle Grid. As a single place, the subject buildings are comparable to other examples of contemporary warehouses characterised with ornate façades and utilitarian rear sections including 377-381 Lonsdale Street, 130-132 Flinders Street and 365-367 Little Bourke Street. Built as warehouses for manufacturing businesses, these examples have an ornate street frontage (with Italianate style elements rather than Gothic), while the rear elevations commonly display highly utilitarian elements such as face brickwork and loading doors on upper floors.

The subject buildings are also comparable to Penman & Dalziel's warehouse, 4-6 Goldie Place, and 23-25 Niagara Lane. Built in laneways, these examples feature highly utilitarian designs which, like 3 Kirks Lane, are highly intact examples of warehouse buildings that are utilitarian yet refined in their design. Nearby laneways such as Goldie Place, Hardware Street and Niagara Lane, located in the block bound by Lonsdale, Elizabeth, Queen and Little Bourke streets, all retain reasonably intact examples of this late nineteenth-century layer of industrial development. However, almost all HO-listed warehouses in those streets have been converted to residences, restaurants or offices while the subject warehouse at 3 Kirks Lane continues to be used as a warehouse.

## 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 extension to HO1005, 418-420 Bourke Street, Melbourne.

Amend HO1005 (418-420 Bourke Street, Melbourne) to reflect the following changes:

- Apply HO1005 (418-420 Bourke Street, Melbourne) to the Gothic Chambers warehouse at 3 Kirks Lane.
- Change the entry in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay to 'Gothic Chambers and warehouse' 418-420 Bourke Street and 3 Kirks Lane, Melbourne'.
- Amend the map for HO1005 to match the changes noted above.

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
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**C (418-420 Bourke Street frontage only)

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 1993**C (418-420 Bourke Street frontage only)

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**Review of Heritage  
overlay listings in the  
CBD 2002**C (418-420 Bourke Street frontage only)

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011**C (418-420 Bourke Street frontage only)

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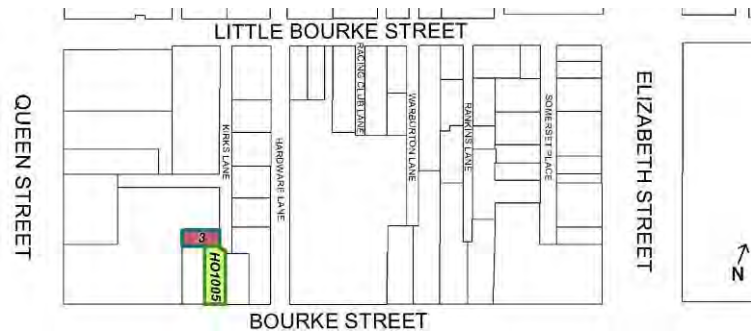


## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Former Gothic Chambers and warehouse



**PS ref no:** HO1005



### What is significant?

The former Gothic Chambers and its warehouse at 418-420 Bourke Street and 3 Kirks Lane, Melbourne, a pair of four-storey warehouses built in 1890 for the City Property Company.

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

- The original building form and scale (Bourke Street [and](#) Kirks Lane);
- The original face brick principle and rear façades and pattern and size of original openings (Bourke Street and Kirks Lane);

- Original roof form to both buildings including the transverse gable roof to the front section of Bourke Street;
- Gabled parapet;
- The distinctive façade with Venetian Gothic Revival elements and other ornamental detailing to the façade (Bourke Street);
- The original timber double-hung sash windows (Bourke Street and Kirks Lane) and full height glazed timber loading doors (Kirks Lane);~~and~~
- Evidence of original warehouse details including central projecting hoist beam and suspended loading platforms, as well as other refined detailing including the use of curved bricks around the openings (rear of Bourke Street and Kirks Lane).

More recent alterations, including those to the ground floor shopfronts in Bourke Street and changes to openings to the rear of 418-420 Bourke Street, are not significant.

### How it is significant?

The former Gothic Chambers and warehouse at 418-420 Bourke Street and 3 Kirks Lane, Melbourne, is of local historic, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

The Gothic Chambers and warehouse are historically significant for their association with a key phase in Melbourne's development when, during the economic boom of the 1880s and the early 1890s, an increasing number of investors constructed architect-designed multi-storey factory and warehouse premises in the city to house the growing manufacturing and retail industry. Built in 1890 in an industrial area near the famous Kirks' Horse Bazaar as an investment property of the City Property Company, the place is distinguished for its long-term industrial use and association with Melbourne's small-scale manufacturers. The City Property Company developed a number of key city properties in the 1880s and early 1890s during Melbourne's land boom, including the former nearby Clarke's Buildings (demolished in the 1960s), and a number of landmark city properties. The Kirks Lane warehouse's long-standing and continued use as a low scale warehouse/factory building into the present day contributes to its significance. (Criterion A)

The Gothic Chambers and warehouse are significant as a highly intact example of a pair of warehouses built in the late Victorian period. Constructed in 1890 to a design by architect Charles D'Ebro, the buildings provide tangible evidence of the industrial expansion in central Melbourne during this period. Their function and structure represent the warehouse typology once very common across the city blocks within the Hoddle Grid. The Gothic Chambers' Bourke Street frontage features Gothic Revival style elements. The Kirks Lane elevations of both buildings have very high integrity externally with minimal changes and display highly utilitarian elements such as face brickwork and loading doors on upper floors. This combination of stylistic devices is representative of a type of building complex associated with manufacturing and wholesaling built within Hoddle Grid. The location of the Kirks Lane warehouse in a minor street or laneway with side access to facilitate the movement of goods and materials in and out of the building is also characteristic of its type. (Criterion D)

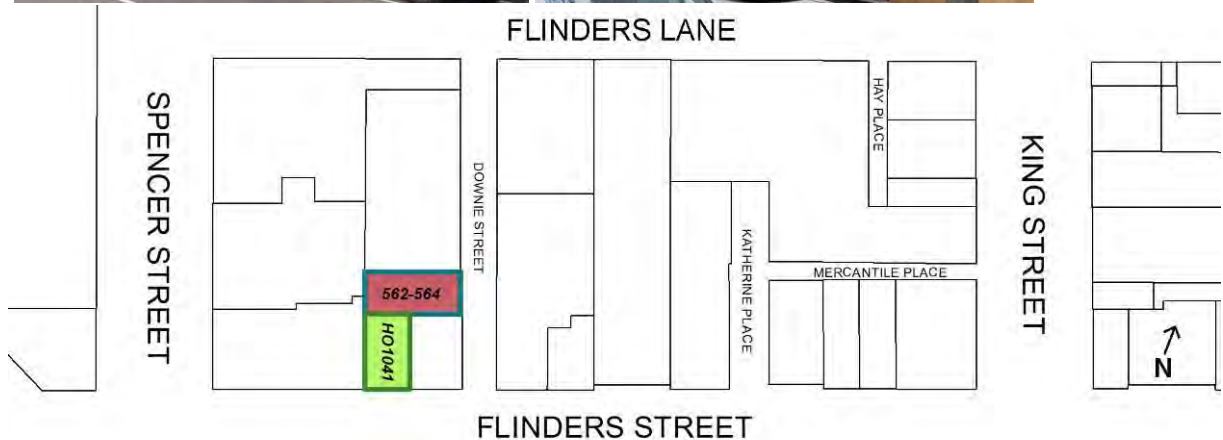
The Gothic Chambers at 418-420 Bourke Street is of aesthetic significance for its use of Venetian Gothic Revival style elements, which was unusual for a small-scale warehouse. The construction of Gothic or Medieval Revival style buildings in central Melbourne predominantly occurred in the period between 1880 and 1893, mostly built for financial institutions and organisations. The use of detailing inspired by Venetian Gothic and Romanesque architecture in the Bourke Street building distinguishes it from other contemporary warehouses that more commonly utilised the widely popular Italianate style. The Venetian Gothic and Romanesque inspired elements include the transverse gable roof behind a gabled parapet with corbel table and arcade and pointed-arched openings on either side of the gable end; pointed-arched openings set between pilasters with decorative capping and base at the building's edges. Other highly refined detailing to the façade includes the letters 'CPC' (City Property Company) entwined on a moulded cement shield between a pair of equilaterally arched windows; rendering over the windows debossed with a leaf motif; a band of brickwork laid in chequerboard pattern between the first and second floors; the Romanesque inspired frieze within the iron balustrade and on post moulding; splayed or chamfered edges of the openings; and the two pilasters with simple capital, finished in painted render on the ground floor. (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 Markillie's Prince of Wales Hotel
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	562-564 Flinders Street and rear in Downie Street Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	103985



SURVEY DATE: October 2018		SURVEY BY: Context	
<b>HERITAGE INVENTORY</b>	H7822-1232	<b>EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY</b>	HO1041 (562-564 Flinders Street)
<b>PLACE TYPE</b>	Individual Heritage Place	<b>PROPOSED CATEGORY</b>	Significant
<b>DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:</b>	Smith, Sydney & Ogg (1915), P J O'Connor (1927 & 1936)	<b>FORMER GRADE</b>	Significant, B
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Federation/Edwardian Period (1902-c1918) Interwar Period (c1919-c1940)	<b>BUILDER:</b>	C F Pittard (1915)
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Federation/Edwardian Period (1902-c1918) Interwar Period (c1919-c1940)	<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	1915, 1927 & 1936

## THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations.	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
HISTORIC THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
13 Enjoying the city	13.6 Eating and drinking
6 Creating a functioning city	6.7 Transport

## LAND USE

HISTORIC LAND USE	
Archaeological block no: 57	Inventory no: 846
Character of Occupation: Commercial	
Land sale details not provided	
1839 Williamson	1837 garden area
1837 & 1840 Hoddle	
1855 Kearney	
1866 Cox	Building
1877 Dove	Kellys Hotel, two-storey building, sheds, yard
1880 Panorama	
1888 Mahlstedt	Kellys Hotel, two-storey building, two outbuildings
1905/6 Mahlstedt	Prince of Wales Hotel, two-storey building with outbuildings; part of Hazardous Store (one storey)
THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Warehouses and yards
1920s	Hotel
1960s	Hotel

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place, extending HO1041, 562-564 Flinders Street, Melbourne, to include the Former Markillie's Prince of Wales Hotel's rear wing fronting Downie Street, Melbourne.

**Extent of overlay:** Refer to map showing recommend revised curtilage to HO1041.

## SUMMARY

The former Markillie's Prince of Wales Hotel, at 562-564 Flinders Street, is an Edwardian Baroque residential hotel building with a later interwar Commercial Palazzo style extension built at the rear, facing Downie Street. The Flinders Street building was designed by Sydney Smith & Ogg for the Carlton & United Breweries in 1915, on a site previously occupied by the Kelly's Hotel from 1877. The rear building was designed in 1927 as an extension to the 1915 Markillie's Prince of Wales Hotel by Melbourne architect PJ O'Connor.



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

### Enjoying the city

#### *Eating and drinking*

Alcohol was a mainstay of a frontier colonial town. During the early period of settlement, many people resorted to alcoholic beverages rather than drink the city's unpalatable and contaminated water. Hotels were abundant in Melbourne; in working-class areas, such as Carlton, there was virtually one on every corner. One of Melbourne city's first permanent buildings was Fawkner's hotel established in 1836 on the corner of William Street and Flinders Lane (Context 2012: 98).

A weakness for drink was considered by many in the Victorian era as a human failing; self-improvement and moral fortitude were the values to strive for. The consumption of hard liquor generally went hand-in-hand with gambling and with Melbourne's lively night life. Social problems associated with drunkenness in late nineteenth-century Melbourne made alcohol a chief cause for steps towards social reform, resulting in the establishment of the powerful temperance movement and local abstinence societies (Context 2012: 90, 98).

Hotels responded to the changing times and circumstances. In the early 1900s, falling hotel standards and pressure from the temperance movement prompted the state government to reduce the number of liquor licenses. From 1907 the Licences' Reduction Board reduced the number of hotels in all districts to 1885 statutory levels. Many hotel buildings were subsequently demolished or adapted to different uses; other hotel owners upgraded and refurbished their buildings from this period through to the 1920s and 1930s in order to meet the new Victorian licensing conditions that were contingent on the provision of adequate accommodation and other facilities (Dunstan 2008).

### Creating a functioning city

#### *Transport*

The first Europeans arrived in Melbourne by sea, establishing routes from Van Diemen's Land, and later from Sydney and Adelaide, and directly from Britain. The Yarra River allowed seagoing vessels close proximity to the settlement. Within the first twenty years of the town's settlement, Melbourne had embraced the latest form of transport – the steam locomotive. In 1854 the city's first railway was built between Flinders Street and Sandridge (Port Melbourne). With a large volume of shipping traffic arriving at the port, this route was one of the busiest and most in need of a regular rail service (Context 2012:54-56).

Other new rail lines soon followed, snaking out in all directions from the city, linking the metropolis and its fast-growing suburbia. Country areas, including Geelong and Ballarat, were among the first to be connected to the city by rail, and a large central station at Spencer Street was built in the 1860s to service these operations. Spencer Street Station became the city terminal of Melbourne's country lines, and its inter-colonial (and later inter-state) rail services (Carroll 2008). A brick and iron rail viaduct, known as Flinders Street Railway Viaduct, was built over Flinders Street connecting the Flinders Street Station and Spencer Street Station in 1890, opening in 1891 (Context 2012:54-56).

The early twentieth century saw significant expansion of central Melbourne's railway infrastructure. With rapid suburban development in the northern areas of Melbourne during the first decade of the 1900s, suburban and city railway traffic increased by 42.8 per cent. A new Flinders Street Station was built in 1910-11, and between 1911 and 1917, the Flinders Street Railway Viaduct was duplicated from two tracks to four, and strengthened to increase the carrying capacity to 160 tons (*Argus* 28



February 1911:7; *Age* 24 November 1911:8; *Leader* 6 January 1912:39; *RVIA Journal of Proceedings* 1913:59). In addition, in 1924, the Spencer Street Railway Station (today's Southern Cross Station) was extended with construction of platforms 11 to 14 for suburban trains (Carroll 2008). By the 1930s Flinders Street Station claimed to be the world's busiest station, handling almost 300 000 passengers daily (Churchward 2008).

At the same time, road traffic congestion and the dangers of speed became increasing concerns through the early twentieth century as motor cars and buses and electric trams slowly replaced horse-drawn vehicles (Context 2012:54-56). The Spencer Street Bridge, the first major new crossing to be created over the lower Yarra in Melbourne since the Morrell Bridge of 1899-1900, was constructed by the Victorian Railways Construction Branch in 1929-30. The bridge was the first bridge to effectively cut the city off from direct contact with its port (VHD record for Spencer Street Bridge).

## SITE HISTORY

The subject site sits on part of Crown Allotments 2 and 3, Block 1. Allotment 2 had been purchased by P L Campbell in 1837 for £430, whilst Allotment 3 had been purchased by A Walker in the same year for £420 (CoMMaps). In 1866, a building occupied the subject site, and by 1877, a two-storey building housed Kellys Hotel, which also included two outbuildings. By 1905-06, the Prince of Wales Hotel had been constructed on the site fronting Flinders Street with outbuildings in existence at the rear (Fels, Lavelle & Mider 1993, Inventory no 846). Mahlstedt plans indicate that by 1910, the rear of the subject site was also occupied by a hazardous store (see Figure 1).

A new Prince of Wales Hotel (later known as Markillie's Prince of Wales Hotel) was built on Flinders Street in 1915 in the Edwardian Baroque Style and designed by Sydney Smith & Ogg for Carlton & United Breweries with the Richmond builder, C F Pittard, as the contractor (Butler 2011:330). The Carlton & United Breweries had an established relationship with the firm of Sydney Smith & Ogg, particularly following the changes to hotel licencing in the early years of the twentieth century. The firm had designed multiple hotels for the company in the same period as the subject site around Melbourne and its suburbs, often influenced by the Art Nouveau style.

In the 1920s, with the demise of port activity in the northern bank of Yarra River near Flinders Street, shedding and mercantile businesses primarily associated with shipping in the nearby area declined. The land at the rear of 562-564 Flinders Street formerly occupied by a hazardous store became vacant, and Downie Street was formed through subsequent subdivision (Mahlstedt Map section 1, no 24, 1923).

The current reinforced concrete building on the site fronting Downie Street (addressed as part of 562 Flinders Street) was built as a rear extension to the Prince of Wales Hotel. The construction was carried out in two stages. Early work on the extension was completed in 1927, with the architect P J O'Connor responsible for the design (Butler 2011: 330; MBAI 9206). These alterations were described as 'extensive,' however the building was not completed at the time and it is not known to what extent the extension progressed (*Age* 1 July 1936:15). The original scheme was costed at £27,000, but only £14,000 was expended, indicating the building fell short of the original scheme (*Age* 1 July 1936:15). Applications were made in 1936 to complete the balance of the work, consisting of an additional three storeys to the existing building, extensions to an existing dining room and new sanitary blocks, at an estimated cost of £12,000. P J O'Connor remained the architect (*Age* 1 July 1936:15). This work was recorded as 'alterations and additions' on the building permit card (MBAI

17468). The additions, in the Commercial Palazzo style, were again remarked upon as being extensive (Butler 2011:330; Age 1 July 1936:15).

By the time the rear additions were made to the Prince of Wales Hotel, it had been renamed Markillie's Prince of Wales Hotel, reflecting Arthur Markillie's time as the licensee (Butler 2011:330). Markillie had previously been the licensee of the Laurel Hotel in Ascot Vale c1900, and by 1920 held the licence for the Prince of Wales (Butler 2011:330). Markillie's tenure at the hotel continued into the 1940s, with a short break around World War I, when Bertha Brown took over the licence (Butler 2011:333). The Downie Street extension indicates the success of the Prince of Wales Hotel under Markillie's licence, and also reflects changes in Victorian licencing legislation during the 1920s and 1930s that required the provision and upgrade of hotel accommodation. The purposeful interlinking of the buildings is evident in Mahlstedt plans from 1948 (see Figure 2). The rear extension to the hotel fronting Downie Street is shown in Figure 3.

The entire site of Markillie's Prince of Wales Hotel at 562-564 Flinders Street, including the extension facing Downie Street, was refurbished in 2008 to designs by Perkins Architects. The refurbishments saw the site converted to Youth Hostels of Australia (YHA) accommodation, with the Prince of Wales Hotel bar area retained (CoMMaps).



Figure 1. Mahlstedt plans in 1910 showing the Prince of Wales Hotel with the subject site to the rear occupied by a timber structure named "Mundells Hazardous Store/ Bag Store". (Source: Mahlstedt Map Section 1, no 24, 1910)

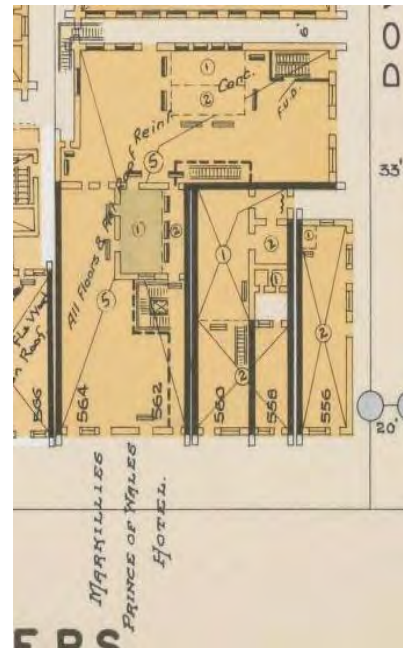


Figure 2. Mahlstedt plans in 1948 showing Markillie's Prince of Wales Hotel with the subject building as an extension to the rear, demonstrating how the building was purposely connected. (Source: Mahlstedt Map Section 1, no 24, 1948)



Figure 3. The subject building second from left hand side, Markillie's Hotel and Saloon Bar, in Downie Street in 1960-70. (Source: Halla 1960-70, Melbourne Library Service [copyright](#))

*Sydney Smith & Ogg, architects*

Architects Sydney Wigham Smith (1868-1933) and Charles A Ogg (1867-1932) formed a partnership in 1889. Smith was initially articled to his father, Sydney William Smith, who worked as an engineer and municipal surveyor in suburban Melbourne for some 30 years. Ogg worked for Reed, Henderson & Smart for five years before entering the partnership (Coleman 2012: 676).

Sydney Smith & Ogg designed houses, shops, banks, hotels and churches, and their early designs drew on the Arts and Crafts and Art Nouveau styles of the United Kingdom. One of the notable examples in the city is Milton House, Flinders Lane (1901).

The firm of Sydney Smith & Ogg had an established relationship with the Carlton & United Breweries, particularly following the changes to hotel licencing in the early years of the twentieth century. From c1911 to 1914, the firm produced a series of innovative hotel designs, influenced by the Arts and Crafts and Art Nouveau styles, largely in the inner suburbs, including the Bendigo Hotel, Collingwood (1911); the Perseverance Hotel, Fitzroy (1911), the Kilkenny Inn, King Street, Melbourne (1913), Prince Albert Hotel, Williamstown (1915-16). Similar characteristics can be seen in their designs for a series of State Savings Banks, including Moonee Ponds (1905), Elsternwick (1907), and Yarraville (1909). All have symmetrical, red-brick facades with various combinations of bay, arched and circular window forms and render, wrought iron and terracotta detailing (Coleman 2012: 677).

A later example of Sydney Smith & Ogg's work for Carlton & United Breweries is the Carlton Hotel on Bourke Street, Melbourne, reconstructed in 1936, demonstrating the Breweries' extended activity in the hotel industry (Butler 2011: 67). Further, Sydney Smith & Ogg had also designed the Abbotsford Brewery, which belonged to Carlton & United Breweries, in 1912 ('Abbotsford Brewery, Church Street, Richmond', 1912).

Smith and Ogg both died in the early 1930s, however Charles Edward Serpell (1879-1962), who joined the partnership in 1921, continued to practice until he retired in 1956 (Coleman 2012: 677).

*P J O'Connor, architect*

The Hermes database entry for St Patrick's Catholic Presbytery, Camperdown, records the following communications from John O'Connor, the son of P J O'Connor, providing background to his father's career:

*Patrick Joseph O'Connor was born at Melbourne on 23 February 1901, one of thirteen children of John O'Connor, stationmaster, and his wife Margaret (nee Whelan). He was educated at a Catholic school in Carnegie and at an early age entered the Victorian Railways Architects Office as an articled pupil. He studied architecture at night classes conducted at the Working Men's College and after gaining experience in the Railways Department, he set up in practice as an architect in Collins Street in 1926. He took James Thomas Brophy into partnership in 1946, after which the practice was known as O'Connor & Brophy.*

*P. J. O'Connor specialised in ecclesiastical and liquor industry work, and designed many Catholic churches, convents, presbyteries and schools in Victoria between 1926 and his death in 1959. His most accomplished works include the St John of God Hospital in Ballarat and St Roch's Church in Glen Iris (Hermes record for 'St Patrick's Catholic Presbytery, Camperdown').*

In addition, O'Connor also designed St Mary of the Immaculate Conception (Catholic), Ascot Vale (1934), St Joan of Arc (Catholic), Brighton (1938), Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception (Catholic), Sunshine (1940), Sacred Heart (Catholic), Newport (1942), Our Lady Star of the Sea (Catholic), Flinders Naval Depot (1948), Uniting (Methodist), Albion (1951), and St Margaret Mary's (Catholic), Spotswood (1953) (Coleman 1996:64).

O'Connor also designed the Great Britain Hotel in Flinders Street. His residential work included Catholic presbyteries and private homes, for example, St Patrick's Presbytery, Camperdown (1927-28); his own house at 452 Warrigal Road, Ashburton (1930-32); St Mary's Presbytery, Manning Road, Malvern East (1931); and Bradoc House, 32-38 George Street, East Melbourne (1933). His offices were located at 317 Collins Street (*Argus* 7 April 1938:4).

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

The site forms an L-shaped parcel with its primary frontage to Flinders Street. The rear of site faces Downie Street, off Flinders Street between King and Spencer streets. Downie Street runs north-south connecting Flinders Street and Flinders Lane.

The former Markillie's Prince of Wales Hotel at 562-564 Flinders Street features Edwardian Baroque style elements, with a rendered façade that is deeply modelled with bas relief detail, heavy mouldings and a skilful combination of mass and void. Ox-bow pediments over the intermediate and uppermost windows are echoed laterally by a wide bow-fronted balcony which surmounts a series of superposed columns which terminate at first floor levels. A major part of the central balcony recess is the broad opening arch, with foliated spandrels. Further decorative moulding is used to decorate the front of this bowed balcony, at the centre of the moulding is a representation of three ostrich feathers which are traditionally used as a symbol of the Prince of Wales. A sizeable parapet cornice and brackets accentuate the highly moulded façade character of the building, together with the more traditional device of pavilion-like bays, expressed with heavily ruled smooth rustication.

The ground level appears to have had alterations carried out, including the removal of glazed tiles, however the openings retain early or original leadlight windows. Metal lettering bearing the name 'Markillie's Hotel' are still present.

The rear building facing Downie Street is a five-storey interwar residential hotel building finished with painted render. With elements of the interwar Commercial Palazzo style, it exhibits many of the main characteristics of the style, such as a strong vertical emphasis resulting from projecting pilasters with vertically proportioned windows separated by articulated spandrels at each floor. It is constructed using a reinforced concrete frame with a low pitch roof of corrugated iron.

The Downie Street building at street level is also of painted render, punctuated by four double-layer arches that align with the vertical bays of windows above rather than contemporary shopfronts (the 1960s photos show that these are original but were originally rusticated to mimic stonework). There is a minor cornice at first floor level, and a much more prominent cornice at second floor level. It is likely that, given that the upper three floors were added in 1936, this was the original roof cornice to the original 1927 building.

The main façade of the Downie Street building is divided into four equal bays by projecting pilasters and terminates at a substantial dentilled cornice. Recessed spandrels with restrained decoration and small ventilators express the upper floor levels, although those at the (original) first floor level are more elaborate with faux Juliet balcony panels.

The side (north) elevation is of simple painted render without window openings or decoration of any kind. The doors and windows with lead glass highlights to the ground floor openings are a post-1970s alteration. The aluminium frame sash windows to the upper levels are later replacements.

## **INTEGRITY**

The original part of the former Markillie's Prince of Wales Hotel facing Flinders Street at 562-564 Flinders Street maintains a high level of integrity, with little change to its original design features evident. The original pattern of fenestration is intact, and most windows appear to be early or original. The highly decorated façade retains its elaborate moulding, with balconies, pilasters and aediculae intact. The elaborate cornice has also been retained. The scale and form of the 1915 building is also intact.

The section of the building at the rear of 562-564 Flinders Street, facing Downie Street, is highly intact with very few changes visible to original or early fabric. The original pattern of fenestration, including pilasters, decorative spandrels, window openings and cornices are all extant at the upper levels. The original (probably timber framed or steel) windows have been replaced with heavy aluminium framed windows. The basic configuration of the painted render façade at street level is original. The heavy rustication has been removed by the application of smooth render and the original doors and windows with lead glass highlights have been replaced. The scale and configuration of the 1936 form of the building has been retained.

The former Markillie's Hotel's continuous use as residential hotel also enhances the integrity of the place. Overall, the building has high integrity.

## **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

Residential hotels were a common building typology in the City of Melbourne, with examples dating from the early years of its establishment until the present. A number of nineteenth century hotels were



rebuilt or substantially altered during the 1920s and 1930s, often incorporating residential accommodation, often to upper levels, and improved amenities in response to requirements of the Liquor Licencing Board. The subject site comprises an earlier (1915) hotel facing Flinders Street with a rear annexe built in two different stages. The 1927 phase, the full design of which was not realised, was later completed in 1936 by the same architects in a compatible style, with all phases constituting the building in its present form.

The Sydney Smith & Ogg portion of the subject building at 562-564 Flinders Street is an example of c1910-15 hotel buildings. It was built to replace an 1870s hotel on the site, for the Carlton & United Breweries, who hired the firm to design many hotels around Melbourne at a similar time. In the early twentieth century, central Melbourne still featured significant residential areas, and had many terraces, boarding houses and residential hotels. These residential hotels were numerous and small in scale and played an important role in the social life of Melbourne, as the city residents often spent their leisure time outside their own homes. Hotels often became meeting spots, and home to anyone visiting or arriving in Melbourne. The 1915 building on the subject site is indicative of the style of smaller hotels that were common throughout Melbourne in the period it was built. This section of the building can be compared with the following examples, due to a similar use, scale, design, location and creation date.

The following examples in different ways are comparable with the former Markillie's Prince of Wales Hotel, being of a similar use, scale, location and/or creation date. The images and descriptions are provided by CoM Maps unless stated otherwise, with images dating from c2000 or later.

*97-99 Elizabeth Street, 1911 (HO616)*

Four and eight-storey building with retail space on ground floor. The eight-storey building designed as a hotel by Nahum Barnet was built in 1911. The four-storey building, formerly a warehouse, was incorporated into the 1911 hotel in 1934.



Figure 1. 97-99 Elizabeth Street, built in 1911.

*Former Charles Hotham Private Hotel, 2-8 Spencer Street, 1913 (HO1074)*

A four-storey brick building on a bluestone block foundation with a corner tower and ground level retail. When first built it incorporated two shops. Designed by William Pitt in the Edwardian Baroque style it features many Arts and Crafts elements. It was built in 1913 by Clement Langford for Jane Hall. Abraham Rapke, a hairdresser and tobacconist, and his wife Mrs Pearl Rapke a pawnbroker



were the first tenants of the shops. During the World War Two the upper floors were leased by the Government and utilised as a home for American sailors. There had been a hotel on this site since 1852.



Figure 2. 2-8 Spencer Street, built in 1913.

*Former Kilkenny Inn, 248-250 King Street, c1915 (HO679)*

A three-storey brick hotel including a basement and a corner tower. Designed by Sydney Smith & Ogg in the Edwardian Freestyle manner showing Art Nouveau and Arts and Crafts influences. It was built by C F Pittard in 1915 for Mrs Helen Horgan. Now attached to this property and facing Lonsdale Street is a two-storey rendered brick building, built in 1889 as a temperance hotel.



Figure 4. 248-250 King Street, built c1915.

*Commercial Travellers Association Building, 318-324 Flinders Street, 1913 (HO659)*

A ten-storey steel framed concrete hotel of 350 rooms with a basement. Designed by H W & F B Tompkins in the Neo-Baroque style and built by F E Shillabeer in 1913 for the Australian Travellers Association. It features a facade of polished granite to the first storey and the use of quite unusual decorative glazed cream brick work. Catching the electric lift express to the roof of what was Melbourne's tallest building the visitors were delighted with the panoramic view. The association held the building until 1976. It was refurbished and converted to a hotel to a design by the Buchan Group in 1998.



Figure 7. 318-324 Flinders Street, built in 1913.

The Downie Street annex (built in 1927 and complemented with additions in 1936) designed by P J O'Connor is more directly comparable to interwar period hotels built in central Melbourne. These hotels often adopted structural steel and reinforced concrete framing, which became popular building materials in Interwar Melbourne, inspired by Chicagoan architecture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Most of the buildings were designed in the interwar Commercial Palazzo or Chicagoesque styles, both of which derived from the rebuilding of the core area of Chicago after the 1871 fire. Although they were characterised by an expressed structural system of concrete columns and floor plates, these examples typically retained elements of classical detailing (albeit restrained) in the form of a rusticated base, expressed (often rusticated) pilasters, projecting cornices and decorative mouldings.

Selected examples of hotels that were either rebuilt or renovated at a similar time include:

*Carlton Hotel, 193-199 Bourke Street, 1936 (HO1001)*

Built on the site of the Queensland Hotel. A five-storey steel framed and brick hotel with basement and rooftop facility. Designed by Sydney Smith Ogg & Serpell in the Moderne style and built by Thompson & Charters Pty Ltd for Carlton and United Breweries Limited in 1937. The cost of construction was £14,000.



Figure 3. 193-199 Bourke Street, built in 1936.

*Batman's Hill Hotel, 66-70 Spencer Street, 1926-28 (HO1076)*

Interwar renovation and additions to the Victorian-era three-storey brick Batman's Hill Hotel were constructed 1926-28 at an estimated cost of £11,000 by Ivanhoe builder, George Andrew. The client was Mrs A Riley and the design from architects and engineers Greenwood Bradley & Allen working in association with hotel specialist architects, Sydney Smith & Ogg. The decision to add to the old hotel rather than redevelop the site was based on its remarkable sound condition. Apart from the façade design every effort was made to complement the existing building during the project. The first design proposed for the new façade and two additional floors had Smith and Ogg's characteristic Edwardian-Baroque character but a change in direction saw a more sober Greek Revival façade designed solely by Greenwood Bradley & Allen.



Figure 4. 66-70 Spencer Street, built in 1926-28.

The 1915 Sydney Smith & Ogg portion of the building, facing Flinders Street, is one of the more richly detailed and moulded of the Edwardian Baroque hotels in Melbourne. The design has precedents in British work by John Belcher, Pite, and the more conservative Sir Aston Webb (Butler 2011:330). Like the Carlton Hotel and the Batman's Hill Hotel, the 1915 section is located within a city block, rather than occupying a corner block as is often characteristic of hotels. In response, the architects have employed heavily detailed features and forms that compliment and contrast against one another, such as the ox-bow shape referenced in window mouldings and the balcony, alongside a serlian window and Juliet balconies. When compared to other work by the firm, particularly their hotel designs, the subject site is distinguished by its stylistic choices and scale. Other notable examples by the firm, such as the nearby Kilkenny Inn, make purposeful use of their corner sites, with tower elements and details of the Art Nouveau style. As such, the subject site is a good example of the hotel designs the firm of Sydney Smith & Ogg were producing at the time.

The 1915 portion of the subject site is comparable to buildings such as the former Melbourne Steamship Co Building (27-31 King Street) and the former Commercial Travellers Association Building (318-324 Flinders Street) due to similarities derived from their Edwardian Baroque design. All three buildings feature pavilion-like bays flanking the edges of the façade, with differentiated design placed between them. Unlike other examples, the subject site's pavilions are not marked by oriel windows, with the protruding element instead placed centrally between the pavilions (whereas on other examples, this section is usually simplified). Further, the subject site is distinguished by its intended use as a hotel, rather than a commercial building.

The rear extension of the former Markillie's Prince of Wales Hotel is comparable to the HO listed Batman's Hill Hotel at 66-70 Spencer Street, the 1926-28 build date of which precedes by a decade that of the last phase of construction of the subject site (1936). Although the HO listing notes that the latter building reflected a 'sober Greek Revival' design aesthetic, the building is of a similar scale and does share many characteristics with the rear of the former Markillie's Prince of Wales Hotel, including a symmetrical façade divided into equal bays by projecting pilasters terminating at a cornice, albeit with a more exuberant level of classically derived decoration, a recessed central bay with balconies and smaller windows. The Downie Street extension of the former Markillie's Prince of Wales Hotel however is of particular interest as the additions were designed to closely respond to the detail of the original, while the retention of the original cornice and subtle changes in detail allows for the original and the addition to be interpreted. The Batman's Hill Hotel on the other hand appears to have been the result of a total stylistic overlay, so that the addition is not perceptible.

Overall, as a single place comprising sections from 1915 and the interwar period, the former Markillie's Prince of Wales Hotel is an important example of medium-scale residential hotel buildings that have been developed throughout the late Edwardian and the interwar periods.

## 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 extension to HO1041, 562-564 Flinders Street, Melbourne.

Amend HO1041 (562-564 Flinders Street, Melbourne) to reflect the following changes:

- Apply HO1041 (562-564 Flinders Street, Melbourne) to the former Markillie's Prince of Wales Hotel's rear wing in Downie Street.
- Change the entry in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay to 'Markillie's Prince of Wales Hotel, 562-564 Flinders Street and Downie Street, Melbourne'.
- Amend the map for HO1041 to match the changes noted above.

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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- Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Place ID 65597, 'Spencer Street Bridge', Victorian Heritage Database, accessed online June 2019.

## PREVIOUS STUDIES

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**Central Activities District  
Conservation Study 1985**

B (562-564 Flinders Street frontage only)

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 1993**

B (562-564 Flinders Street frontage only)

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

B (562-564 Flinders Street frontage only)

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011**

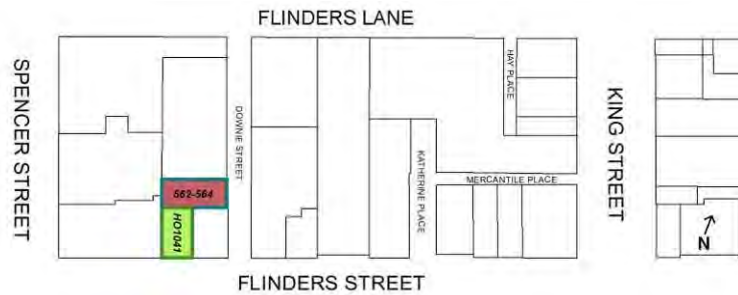
B (562-564 Flinders Street frontage only)

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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Former Markillie's Prince of Wales Hotel

**PS ref no:** HO1041



### What is significant?

The former Markillie's Prince of Wales Hotel at 562-564 Flinders Street, Melbourne, an Edwardian hotel built in 1915, including a rear extension of reinforced concrete built in 1927 and further extended in 1936.

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

- The original building form and detail (Flinders Street and Downie Street);
- The pattern of fenestration and elaborate decorative work to the Flinders Street façade, including the stylised Prince of Wales feathers;
- The early or original 'Markillie's Hotel' metal lettering on the Flinders Street façade;

- The original and early (1927 and 1936) building form and detail, including street level arches to Downie Street;
- The original and early (1927 and 1936) pattern of fenestration; and
- The external wall surfaces of painted cement render.

Its long-standing use as a residential hotel since 1915 is also significant.

Later alterations, including those made to the street level façades, are not significant.

### **How it is significant?**

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The former Markillie's Prince of Wales Hotel site at 562-564 Flinders Street, incorporating its rear annexe facing Downie Street, Melbourne, is of local historic and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

### **Why it is significant?**

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The site at 562-564 Flinders Street is of historical significance for its long-standing use as a residential hotel since the 1870s. The present-day building, known as the former Markillie's Prince of Wales Hotel, was developed on this site in 1915 for the Carlton & United Breweries Ltd, with a rear extension constructed in two phases in 1927 and 1936 during Arthur Markillie's time as the licensee. It provides evidence of both the success of the hotel business under Markillie's licence and of changes in Victorian licencing legislation in the 1920s and 1930s that required the provision and upgrade of hotel accommodation. (Criterion A)

The former Markillie's Prince of Wales Hotel also represents the early twentieth century development of this area near the corner of Spencer and Flinders streets, formerly reliant on port activities on the northern bank of Yarra River. With the demise of the port activities by the 1910s, the shift in character of this area was stimulated by the significant growth of railway and motor traffic into central Melbourne. The hotel's expansions over the early decades of the twentieth century evidence the area's continued importance as one of the main access points into central Melbourne, prompted by major infrastructure-related projects such as Spencer Street Station (now Southern Cross Station) in 1924 and construction of the Spencer Street Bridge in 1929-30. (Criterion A)

The former Markillie's Prince of Wales Hotel is of representative and aesthetic significance as an excellent example of the work of Melbourne architects, Sydney Smith & Ogg and P J O'Connor. The earlier 1915 building fronting Flinders Street is a result of the collaboration between Carlton & United Breweries Ltd and Sydney Smith & Ogg, through which many notable hotel buildings around Melbourne and its surrounding suburbs were produced. The principle elevation of 562-564 Flinders Street features Edwardian Baroque style elements, with a rendered façade that is deeply modelled with bas relief detail, heavy mouldings and a skilful combination of mass and void. The fine detailing to this façade includes a wide central bow-fronted balcony and broad opening arch, decorative mouldings such as sizeable parapet cornice and brackets, ostrich feathers on the central balcony which were traditionally used as a symbol of the Prince of Wales. To the rear of this 1915 building, the Downie Street building (built as an annex in 1927 and added in 1936) is a substantial and highly intact example of an interwar residential hotel. Built to a design by hotel and church architect P J O'Connor, it demonstrates key characteristics of the restrained interwar Commercial Palazzo style, expressed through a strong vertical emphasis

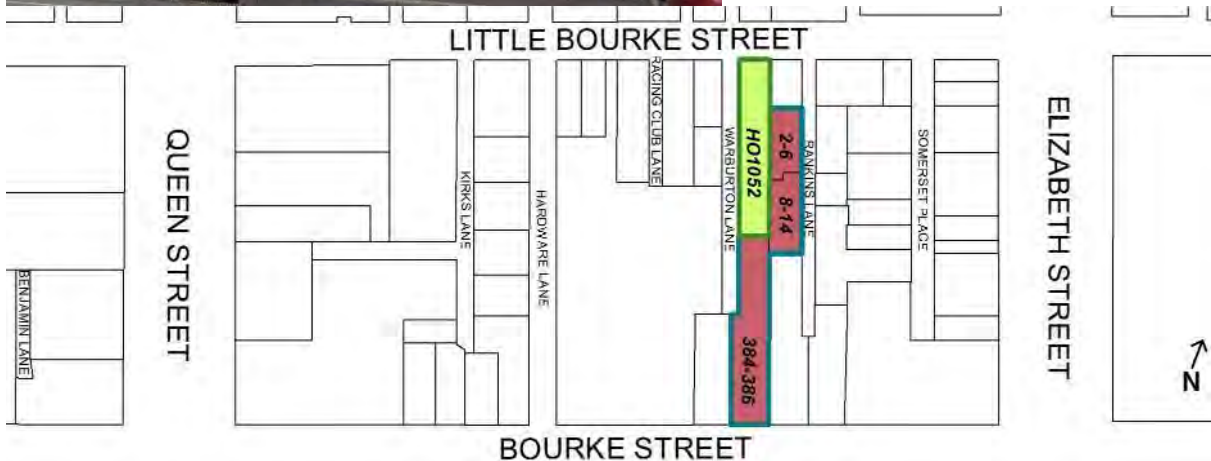
resulting from projecting pilasters and mullions, a substantial cornice, and large horizontally proportioned windows separated by articulated spandrels at each floor. (Criteria D and E)

**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 Thomas Warburton Pty Ltd complex
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	384-386 Bourke Street, 365-367 Little Bourke Street, 2-6 and 8-14 Rankins Lane Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	101189, 110727, 110728, 108145



SURVEY DATE: March 2019, January 2020

SURVEY BY: Context

<b>HERITAGE INVENTORY</b>	H7822-1436	<b>EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY</b>	HO1052 (365-367 Little Bourke Street), HO1205 (365-367 Little Bourke Street and 2-6, 8-14 Rankins Lane)
<b>PLACE TYPE</b>	Individual Heritage Place	<b>PROPOSED CATEGORY</b>	Significant
<b>DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:</b>	Twentyman & Askew (1887) Gibbs & Finlay (1912)	<b>FORMER GRADE</b>	Significant, Contributory, C
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Victorian Period (1851-1901) Federation/Edwardian Period (1902-c1918)	<b>BUILDER:</b>	Overent & Robb (1865) William Radden (1887) Lockington & Sinclair (1912)
		<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	1865 (Bourke), 1887 (Little Bourke), 1912 (rear)



## THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations.	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here.
HISTORIC THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
5 Building a Commercial City	5.4 Developing a retail centre 5.5 Building a manufacturing capacity

## LAND USE

HISTORIC LAND USE	
Archaeological block no: 28	<b>Inventory no:</b> 436 (384-386 Bourke Street), 458 (365-367 Little Bourke Street), 468 & 469 (2-6 and 8-14 Rankins Lane)
Character of Occupation: Commercial	
Land sale details not provided	
1839 Williamson	Buildings on Lt Bourke St frontage Lot 6 (Bourke & Lt Bourke)
1850 Proeschel	Boarding House may be on the site (Bourke)
1866 Cox	Building on the site (Bourke); a pre-1882 timber shop (Lt Bourke); building on site (Rankins)
1880 Panorama	Two-storey building (Bourke); brick shop with three-storeys (Lt Bourke); two-storey building (Rankins)
1888 Mahlstedt	Two-storey building, Warburton, Ironmonger (Bourke); three-storey buildings, owner Mrs Warburton (Lt Bourke); area is part of T Warburton's ironmongery, single-storey buildings (Rankins)
1905/6 Mahlstedt	Two-storey building, three-storey buildings, owner Mrs Warburton (Lt Bourke); area is part of T Warburton's ironmongery, single-storey buildings (Rankins)
THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Warehouses and Yards, Merchants, Residential
1920s	Warehouses and Yards, Merchants
1960s	Merchants, Retail

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place, extending HO1052, 365-367 Little Bourke Street, Melbourne.

**Extent of overlay:** Refer to map showing recommend revised curtilage of HO1052.

## SUMMARY

The former Thomas Warburton complex comprises 384-386 Bourke Street and 365-367 Little Bourke Street, 2-6 and 8-14 Rankins Lane, built in 1865, 1887 and 1912 respectively, for Thomas Warburton Pty Ltd, a prominent ironmongery business. The Thomas Warburton ironmongery occupied many of the buildings in the complex and 384-386 Bourke Street for 100 years, from 1865 until 1965.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

### Building a commercial city

#### *Developing a retail centre*

Even before the early 1850s, Melbourne had established the foundational infrastructure for international trade and commerce, including retail markets, shipping agents, and industry and finance houses - the beginnings of an entrepreneurial global city (Context 2012:2).

Retailing in Melbourne gained official recognition when eight market commissioners were elected in 1841 from a roll of local voters. The commissioners established the Western Market, which became the principal place for selling fresh food, with many goods transported from Melbourne to pastoral settlements. At this time Melbourne's population was 4479, and the colony's was 20,416 (Young and Spearritt 2008).

By the early 1840s, Elizabeth and Swanston streets, from the Town Hall in the south-east to the General Post Office to the north-west, had become the focus of retail activity, influenced also by the location of the Western Market in the west of the city which operated as the city's premier wholesale fruit and vegetable market until 1930 (May 2016:176). The Eastern Market opened in 1847 as a fruit and vegetable market on the corner of Stephen Street (later Exhibition Street) and Bourke Street and drew retail further east.

Department stores offered customers a wide range of goods, organised into 'departments', under the one roof. In Melbourne, department store Buckley & Nunn, which opened in 1854, established Bourke Street as the preferred retail strip.

Retail premises in the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century generally included upper-level accommodation for families involved in the business. Multi-storey shop and dwelling type buildings housing ground-level shop with rooms above were constructed across the retail strips of Melbourne, and three- or more storied commercial and retail buildings began to proliferate from the late 1880s (Lovell Chen 2017:220).

#### *Building a manufacturing capacity*

From the 1850s, the Yarra River and the docks west of Swanston Street were in essence the 'lifeline' of the city. Port facilities and large warehouses were built in this area to serve shipping interests (Context 2012:39-40).

By the 1880s, the areas of Flinders Street, King Street, Little Bourke Street and Spencer Street comprised multiple mercantile offices, produce stores and large-scale bonded stores, including Zander's Bonded Stores and Coles Bonded Stores. As Melbourne developed through the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, so did her manufacturing industry, much of which was established in close proximity to existing warehouses and stores.

Although affected by World War One in the period 1914-1918, by 1921, 38 per cent of Melbourne's workers were employed in industry with almost all new factory jobs in Australia between 1921 and 1947 created in Sydney and Melbourne. The growth of manufacturing, assisted by a new federal tariff in 1921, stimulated urban growth and by the end of the 1920s, Melbourne's population had reached one million people. The expansion of new sectors in the manufacturing industry was maintained by buoyant levels of domestic demand (Marsden 2000:29; Dingle 2008).

In the first decades of the twentieth century, the demand for residential development declined in central Melbourne as many residents moved out of the city to suburbs, and the booming retail and manufacturing sectors rapidly took up available city properties (Marsden 2000:29-30). Multi-storey factory, workshop and warehouse buildings, some designed by architects, increasingly took over the city.

Development in the city slowed with the Great Depression that commenced in October 1929 and continued through the early 1930s. Because of a lack of finance over this period, instead of new construction, some city buildings were substantially re-modelled to create new office, commercial and industrial spaces, and also for use by government.

From the 1930s, like the rest of Australia, an increasing proportion of the city's workforce took up jobs in manufacturing, an industry that led Australia's recovery from the economic depression and a time when, the *Encyclopedia of Melbourne* notes, a

*steep rise in tariffs, devaluation of the Australian pound, falling wages and electricity costs all made local producers far more competitive internationally. Textiles benefited first, then the metals industries and engineering took over as pacemakers* (Dingle 2008).

After being the centre of manufacturing in Australia in the 1920s, Melbourne's importance in this regard began to decline. During the 1940s some city factories and warehouses were left empty or converted for other uses (Context 2012:35).

## SITE HISTORY

The former Thomas Warburton complex comprises 384-386 Bourke Street and 365-367 Little Bourke Street, and 2-6 and 8-14 Rankins Lane, Melbourne. The subject land is part of Crown Allotment 6, Block 20, originally purchased by George Lilly (CoMMaps). It is likely that, by 1850, a boarding house was built on the land (Fels, Lavelle and Mider 1993, Inventory no 436).

The buildings at 384-386 Bourke Street and 365-367 Little Bourke Street, and 2-6 and 8-14 Rankins Lane were erected in 1865, 1887 and 1912 respectively for Thomas Warburton Pty Ltd, a prominent ironmongery established on land between Bourke and Little Bourke streets, between Rankins Lane and Warburton Lane; the latter named after the company.

Thomas Warburton, ironmonger, had established his business in Little Bourke Street c1858. In 1864, Warburton moved to larger premises, buying a block running from Bourke Street through to Little Bourke Street (Figure 1), on which the Warburton family gradually developed an extensive complex comprising more than 11 buildings at one point.

The block bound by Bourke, Elizabeth, Queen and Little Bourke streets was known for horse bazaars, ironmongery and hardware merchants from the 1840s. The area's distance from the main commercial areas to the south and east enabled development of these industries because of relatively cheaper land values.

In 1865, T Warburton lodged a building application with the City of Melbourne to erect two two-storey shops in Bourke Street West, on the site currently known as 384-386 Bourke Street. The work was carried out by Overent & Robb, builders (MCC registration no 792, as cited in AAI record no 73592). The building, originally known as 23-25 Bourke Street West, comprised a pair of semi-detached four-roomed shops and residences. In 1866, the net annual value (NAV) of number 23 was £100 and number 25 was £80 (RB 1866). Each shop had approximately 16-foot (4.87 metre) frontages to

Bourke Street. Figure 1 shows the premises in c1870. 'Warburton's \_\_\_ Warehouse Established 18\_\_' was written on the building's parapet in c1880 (see Figure 2).

The shop and residence on the western side was occupied by the owner Thomas Warburton and his family's business from 1865 until 1965. Between 1865 and 1925, the other shop and residence on the eastern side was leased out to different tenants including D Altson's saddle and harness factory (1880s) and Nutting and Young's saddle factory (1920). From 1925 to 1965, Thomas Warburton's business occupied both shops fronting Bourke Street (S&Mc 1866-1965).



Figure 1. Extract of a c1870 photograph showing the premises of Thomas Warburton outlined in red (then addressed as 23-25 Bourke Street West). (Source: Nettleton c1870, SLV)



Figure 2. Extract of a c1880 photograph showing the principal elevation of 384-386 Bourke Street (then known as 23-25 Bourke Street West). 'Warburton's \_\_\_ Warehouse Established 18\_\_' was written on the building's parapet. (Source: Donald c1880, SLV)

After Thomas Warburton's death in Fiji in 1871, Martha Warburton managed the business until 1896 when she died. Their children Thomas William and Ada Minnie (Arkins) Warburton, with other

siblings, carried on the business until 1908, when the youngest son, Alfred Ernest G F Warburton, assumed control (Regan 2005).

In late 1886, 'J Warburton' applied to erect a new three-storey 'store and warehouse' on the northern section of Warburton's land today known as 365-367 Little Bourke Street (MCC registration no 2459, as cited in AAI 73335; Butler 2011:404). The 1887 store and warehouse building was completed by 1887, by builder William Radden of Rae Street, Fitzroy, to a design by architects Twentyman & Askew, who specialised in warehouse architecture in the late Victorian period (MCC registration no 2459, as cited in AAI 73335). A two and three storey (internally separate) warehouse was erected at the rear of the 1887 building at the same time, and became known as 367a and 367b Little Bourke Street (S&Mc 1910 & 1922). Twentyman & Askew went on to design two more buildings for Mrs Warburton in 1887 (a hotel in Bourke Street) and 1889 (a seven-storey building at 380-382 Bourke Street).

Throughout the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century, 365-367 Little Bourke Street was occupied by various engineers and manufacturers. Thomas Warburton Pty Ltd's storage occupied part of the warehouse space known as 367a Little Bourke Street by 1900 through to the 1930s (S&Mc 1900, 1930 & 1935). By the mid-1920s, the building functioned as the rear part of Warburton's merchandising business in Bourke Street, with the ground level shops and parts of the rear warehouses being leased to other businesses (Butler 2011:404; Mahlstedt Map section 1, no 13, 1925). Warburton's main shop was still operating at 384 Bourke Street and had expanded to the new seven-storey building at 380-382 Bourke Street, which has since been demolished (Butler 2011:404; S&Mc 1896, 1910, 1925, 1942).

In 1912, Thomas Warburton Pty Ltd's complex was further expanded. A three-storey brick warehouse, currently connected to the rear (north elevation) of 384-386 Bourke Street and a symmetrical pair of warehouses at today's 8-10 Rankins Lane were built in 1912 by Lockington & Sinclair to a design by architects Gibbs & Finlay. These warehouses were once part of a group of five warehouses built at the same time and to the same design, on the land held by Warburton's estate. These new 1912 brick warehouses were shared by Thomas Warburton Pty Ltd and other businesses (Age 24 March 1933:11; AAI).

Thomas Warburton Pty Ltd (later Thomas Warburton & Co Pty Ltd) was associated with 384-386 Bourke Street for 100 years between 1865 and 1965. The two shops were merged into one for the company between 1910 and 1925, with openings introduced to the party walls and a new single entrance point constructed from Bourke Street (Mahlstedt Map section 1, no 13, 1910 & 1925; MBAI). An infill was constructed in c1965 between the 1865 main building and the 1912 warehouse (see Figure 3).

Between the mid-1920s and the mid-1930s, at its largest extent, the Thomas Warburton enterprise extended over the following properties, as seen in Figure 3:

- 376-378 Bourke Street (demolished),
- 380-382 Bourke Street and a warehouse at the rear (demolished),
- 384-386 Bourke Street and a warehouse at the rear (subject building),
- 365-367 Little Bourke Street and two warehouses at the rear (subject building),
- 2-6 and 8-14 Rankins Lane (subject buildings),
- 369-371 Little Bourke Street (built in the 1920s), and



- 17 Warburton Lane (likely built in the mid-Victorian period but not directly used by the business).

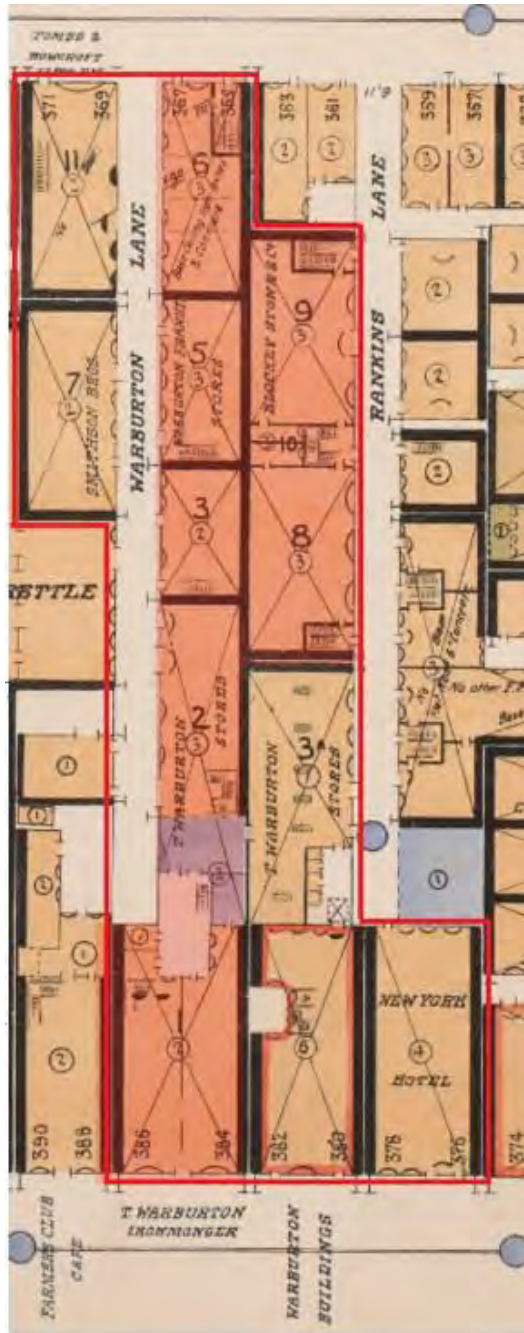


Figure 3. Thomas Warburton's estate comprised more than 11 properties. The subject properties at today's 384-386 Bourke Street, 365-367 Little Collins Street and 2-6 and 8-14 Rankins Lane are shaded in red. (Source: Mahlstedt section 1, map 13, 1925).

In 1965, William Drummond & Co Ltd acquired the property at 384-386 Bourke Street, and between 1966 and 2002 operated jewellery making and retail sales from 384-386 Bourke Street (*Age* 16 March 1966:8; 24 January 1987:140). At this time, major alterations and additions were carried out to the subject building fronting Bourke Street at a total cost of £38,400. The works involved £5000 for the alteration of the shop fronts and £8400 for the installation of a mechanical ventilation system (MBAI



37840, 37841 & 37843). William Drummond & Co was renowned for its fine jewellery, fine china and crystal supplied to a number of well-known clients including royalty, entertainers, politicians, and pastoralists.

365-367 Little Bourke Street currently contains six residential properties, a shop and a food and drink outlet. From 2002, 384-386 Bourke Street has contained various retail outlets in the ground floor shop, and currently houses a business (CoMMaps).

#### *Thomas Warburton & Co Pty Ltd*

Thomas Warburton, mechanical engineer from Altringham, near Manchester, England, and his wife Martha (née Frost), from Derbyshire, arrived in Melbourne in January 1853, at ages 23 and 24. During the first years, Martha supported the household by making tents, which were then in huge demand during the gold rush (Thomas Warburton n.d.).

Once settled in Melbourne, T Warburton entered an unsuccessful and short-lived business in partnership. In 1853, he began a small iron and zinc spouting and guttering works at 11 Little Bourke Street West, which set the foundations of Thomas Warburton Pty Ltd, a wholesale ironmongery business. The company had moved to 384-386 Bourke Street by 1866 and they remained there for 100 years (Thomas Warburton n.d.). A quarter-page advertisement in the 1867 postal directory described his business as 'Galvanised Iron and Zinc Spouting Manufacturer, Importer of Plain and Corrugated Iron, Cast Iron, OG, and Ornamental Gutters, &c'. Warburton began speculating in salvaged goods obtained from wrecks he purchased. He also began trading in the Pacific Islands (Regan 2005).

The business survives today as Thomas Warburton Pty Ltd, owned by the multinational Würth Group. The company is based in Mulgrave, with branches at Sunshine, Kilsyth, Ballarat and Campbellfield (Butler 2011:404).



Figure 4. Thomas (left) and Martha (right) Warburton, and 384-386 Bourke Street after its construction in 1865. (Source: Thomas Warburton n.d.)

#### **SITE DESCRIPTION**

The subject site comprises buildings built for Thomas Warburton, ironmonger, and his company Thomas Warburton Pty Ltd, at 384-386 Bourke Street, 365-367 Little Bourke Street and 2-6 and 8-14 Rankins Lane. The complex of buildings remains as a substantial remnant of the Thomas Warburton enterprise which comprised 11 buildings in the mid-1920s between Bourke and Little Bourke streets at its largest extent. Today's 384-386 Bourke Street comprises two buildings built in 1865 and 1912.

An infill connecting these two buildings was built in 1965. The site adjoins the 1887 building at 365-367 Little Bourke Street. The 1912 warehouses at 2-6 and 8-14 Rankins Lane front Rankins Lane.

### *384-386 Bourke Street (1865)*

Originally built as a pair of two-storey four-roomed shops with residences above, the building's principal elevation to Bourke Street (Figure 5) is of painted render over loadbearing brickwork with Italianate style decorative elements. At the first-floor level the façade is symmetrical except there is a narrow rectangular pilaster at the eastern end which continues to the parapet level. There is a substantial cornice supported on multiple acanthus leaf brackets with a line of fine dentils below (Figure 6). Above the cornice there is a central low triangular parapet and a short section of horizontal parapet at each end, separated from the central parapet by open balustrades. At the first-floor level there is a minor cornice.

The first-floor level comprises four vertically proportioned window openings with original timber framed double hung windows with a semi-circular arched top and vermiculated keystone. A decorative mould runs around the semi-circular head of each window, connecting with a cornice that connects the spring points of the windows. There is an unusual moulded string course that runs between each pair of windows at the sill level, and a recessed panel of painted render below the sills of the two end windows (see Figure 5).

The ground floor is substantially altered with modern shopfronts. The rustication to the pilaster on the right-hand (or eastern) side is partially intact. New projected signages are installed on the ground- and first-floor level (see Figure 5 and Figure 6).



Figure 5. Bourke Street elevation of 384-386 Bourke Street. Note the unusual moulded string course that runs between each pair of upper-level windows at the sill level. (Source: Context, January 2020)



Figure 6. Close-up view of the refined upper-level detailing including the parapet and open balustrade, cornice supported on acanthus leaf brackets with a line of fine dentils below, and semi-circular arched windows with vermiculated keystone. (Source: Context, January 2020)

### *365-367 Little Bourke Street (1887)*

365-367 Little Bourke Street, a three-storey warehouse built in 1887 (Figure 7), is a late Victorian period warehouse that has a painted render finish over loadbearing brickwork with Italianate style decorative elements. Constructed during Melbourne's land boom period, this building features more elaborate detailing than the Bourke Street building's frontage.

The building features a symmetrical façade with a flat parapet with a horizontal cornice and dentilation below. At the first- and second-floor level there is a minor cornice. Four bays of windows are provided on the first and second levels. The openings on the second floor are three-centred arched, while round-arched openings are provided on the first-floor level. Timber-framed double-hung sash windows on both upper levels appear original. Rectangular pilasters frame the façade.

The side (east) elevation opens to Warburton Lane. The building comprises two- and three-storey warehouses to the rear, all developed as part of the 1887 expansion. The side elevation has a utilitarian appearance, featuring bichrome face brickwork and rendered cornice on the top edge across the width of the building on this elevation. Original segmental arched window openings are mostly retained. Original openings have splayed edges and cement sills with supporting brackets. Rectangular openings with simple concrete lintels and sills in the mid-level are likely to be later insertions or alterations (Figure 8). Some of the ground-level openings facing Warburton Lane have been altered, with the exceptions being the intact round-arched windows and a wide, centrally placed arched garage door.





Figure 7. Little Bourke Street elevation (left) and Warburton Lane elevation (right) of 365-367 Little Bourke Street. (Source: Context, January 2020)



Figure 8. Side elevation of 365-367 Little Bourke Street fronting Warburton Lane. Later rectangular openings with concrete lintels and sills, and the original window openings with cement sills with brackets and splayed edges on the either side of the later openings. (Source: Context, January 2020)

*Rear of 384-386 Bourke Street & 8-10 Rankins Lane (1912)*

Three of the five three-storey 1912 utilitarian warehouses built for the Thomas Warburton Pty Ltd survive in Warburton Lane (rear of 384-386 Bourke Street, see Figure 9) and Rankins Lane (nos 2-6 and 8-14, see Figure 10) in 2019. Each warehouse is three-storey, constructed of face brick load-bearing walls. The elevation to Warburton Lane has five bays, separated by plain vertical columns of brickwork that terminate in semi-circular arches at the third level for the middle three bays. The pair in Rankins Lane comprise four bays each, with the two central bays terminating in semi-circular arches. In the middle of the pair, there is a recessed section.

All three examples share similar elements such as a recessed spandrel of brickwork at each floor level connecting the brick columns. The two end bays terminate in brick corbel heads, supported by reinforced concrete lintels, which are also present over each of the large rectangular window openings at the ground and first floor levels. Hoists survive at the third levels and sets of double doors at each level for loading and unloading are also retained.

The Warburton Lane building (Figure 9) has all of the windows installed with security bars, and altered ground floor openings replaced with brick infill. The ground- and upper-level openings and timber frames and joineries in the Rankins Lane buildings have generally been retained.



Figure 9. The 1912 warehouse fronting Warburton Lane, at the rear of 384-386 Bourke Street (left). Note the upper-level detailing of the Warburton Lane warehouse, including the corbel heads detailing above each end bay, timber loading doors and a hoist (right). (Source: Context, March 2019)





Figure 10. 2-6 and 8-14 Rankins Lane (left) and 8-14 Rankins Lane (right). (Source: Context, January 2020)



Figure 11. Recessed section between 2-6 and 8-14 Rankins Lane. (Source: Context, January 2020)

Figure 12. Example of intact openings and timber doors and windows at 8-14 Rankins Lane. (Source: Context, January 2020)

### INTEGRITY

Both the 1865 building at 384-386 Bourke Street and the 1887 building at 365-367 Little Bourke Street are highly intact above the ground floor with some changes visible to the original or early



elements of the buildings. The Bourke Street building retains its original painted render principal façade with pilaster, cornices, parapet, balustrade and other Victorian Italianate style decorative elements. Similarly, the Little Bourke Street building also retains its original painted render principal façade with pilasters, cornices, flat parapet, and other Victorian Italianate style decorative elements. Both buildings retain the original pattern of openings and timber frame windows above the ground first floor. Shopfronts of both buildings have been altered. On the Warburton Lane elevation, the rectangular openings with concrete lintels are also later additions.

Along Warburton and Rankins lanes, the 1912 warehouses are substantially intact, retaining their original red face brick walls, and original or early elements including the pattern of openings, semi-circular arched bays, recessed spandrels and original warehouse details such as the cat head and double timber loading doors. In the Warburton Lane example, openings at ground level have been infilled with brick.

Overall, apart from the alterations on the ground level and the side elevation, each building is largely intact. As a complex of buildings built over several stages for Thomas Warburton Pty Ltd, the place has a high level of integrity.

### **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

The construction of small-scale shops, warehouses and industrial buildings was an important aspect of development in central Melbourne, especially during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Early manufacturing and wholesaling premises in central Melbourne were often low in scale and built to a major street with access from minor streets and/or laneways to facilitate the movement of material into and out of the building. With the economic development led by the manufacturing industry in central Melbourne, some early businesses established extensive complexes or clusters of buildings built to accommodate expanding businesses. Such complexes often expanded gradually, developing new buildings on adjoining or nearby land that became available or on land they already owned but used as yards, as acquisition of single large plots of land was usually not viable in central Melbourne. Buildings with street-frontages were often used as a main office or retail space, and generally had more ornate façades than laneway frontages and rear buildings.

The former Thomas Warburton Pty Ltd complex illustrates a type of building complex associated with manufacturing and wholesaling, that was once common in central Melbourne but is now unusual. On the City of Melbourne's HO, the examples of mid- to late Victorian buildings formerly part of manufacturing or wholesaling complexes of a comparable extensive scale include the 1887 former Victoria Bond Stores, 548-558 Little Bourke Street (HO700), which functioned as the rear storerooms and warehouses attached to the main building with a decorative Italianate style façade fronting Lonsdale Street (now demolished). The c1879 former McCracken's City Brewery malt store, 538-542 Little Collins Street (HO1057) is the only surviving building from the city complex of one of Australia's leading breweries of its time, which once had a 61-metre frontage to Collins Street. The former Malcolm Reid & Co buildings at 151-163 Bourke Street and the former John Danks & Son at 393-403 Bourke Street (both recommended as significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review) survive as intact individual buildings which are remnants of much larger complexes of buildings associated with commercial enterprises.

As a complex of buildings formerly associated with a single enterprise, the former Thomas Warburton Pty Ltd complex compares more directly with the following examples on the HO which demonstrate a

similar pattern of development. The below images and descriptions are provided by CoMMaps unless stated otherwise, with images dated c2000 or later.

*Currie & Richards showrooms & warehouses, 473-481 Elizabeth Street (HO1025, Significant in HO1125 Elizabeth Street (CBD) Precinct, 413-503 Elizabeth Street)*

The complex consists of a former warehouse, store and retail complex of three buildings (473-481 Elizabeth Street and 'A', 'B' and 'C' warehouses at the rear). The Elizabeth Street shops are a row of four two-storey rendered brick shops. The complex also comprises a basalt-paved courtyard and two brick buildings to the rear with a carriage way entrance from Elizabeth Street. The shops were developed in 1853, with additions dating from 1874, c.1899-1900 and 1908. Currie & Richards, hardware firm, was associated with the buildings from 1869 and through to the mid-twentieth century. The complex was refurbished and subdivided in 1993 with the rear buildings converted to residential apartments (Source: Butler 2011, 222-223).



Figure 13. 471-483 Elizabeth Street (upper), 'A' warehouse (lower left) and 'B' and 'C' warehouses (lower right). (Source: Butler 2011, 222)

*Sniders & Abrahams buildings, 2-20 Drewery Place, 1890 (HO1014, Significant in interim HO1290 Drewery Lane Precinct – recommended in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review); 268-270 Lonsdale Street, 1903 (Contributory in interim HO1290 Drewery Lane Precinct) & 5-7 Drewery Lane, 1910 (VHR H0802, HO905, HO1014, interim HO1290 Drewery Lane Precinct)*

The Drewery Lane Precinct has a strong association with the cigar and cigarette manufacturing firm Sniders & Abrahams who erected the warehouses at 2-20 Drewery Place designed by Nahum Banet (1890); their administrative building at 268-270 Lonsdale Street designed by Sydney Smith & Ogg (1903); and another warehouse at 5-7 Drewery Lane designed by Hugh Ralston Crawford (1910). By the early 1920's Sniders & Abrahams had left the premises in the 1920s, and the buildings were utilised by a succession of merchants up until the early 1960s.



Figure 14. 2-20 Drewery Place, built in 1890 (left), 268-270 Lonsdale Street (middle) and 5-7 Drewery Lane (right).

*Former Craig, Williamson Pty Ltd complex, 57-67 Little Collins Street, 1912 (rear), 1925 (façade)  
(Recommended as significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review)*

57-67 Little Collins Street, Melbourne, is a manufacturing and warehouse complex of two and three storeys, comprising buildings from 1912 (rear) and 1925 (fronting Little Collins Street) built for Craig, Williamson Pty Ltd, clothing and furniture manufacturers and retailers. The complex also incorporated a Victorian-period caretaker's house to the rear. By 1929, Craig, Williamson Pty Ltd vacated the premises, and the complex housed the City East Telephone Exchange from the 1930s.

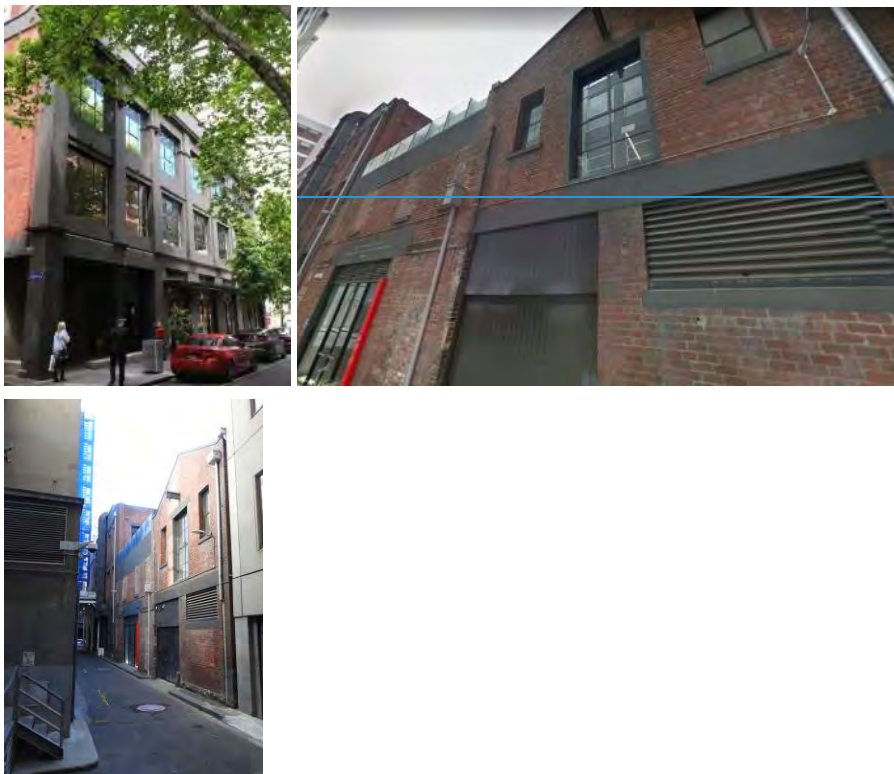


Figure 15. 57-67 Little Collins Street, built in 1925, and the earlier buildings to the rear. (Source: Context, January 2018; [February 2022 Google](#) 2046)

*Gothic Chambers & warehouse, 418-420 Bourke Street, 1890 (HO1005) & 3 Kirks Lane, 1890  
(Recommended for inclusion in HO1005 in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review)*

The Gothic Chambers and the rear warehouse building were built in 1890 to a design by architect Charles D'Ebro. Built as two separate buildings physically, the buildings shared a small yard at the rear, accessed from Kirks Lane. The warehouse fronting Kirks Lane was used in association with the Gothic Chambers until 1970s.



Figure 16. 418-420 Bourke Street (left) and 3 Kirks Lane, both built in 1890.

As a complex of buildings developed for the same owner, the former Thomas Warburton Pty Ltd complex compares favourably with the above HO-listed examples, as it retains a substantial cluster of buildings which clearly illustrate a historical pattern of development in central Melbourne. As large plots of land were mostly not available in central Melbourne, the development of complexes of buildings over time on adjoining or nearby land to accommodate an expanding enterprise was not uncommon. The pattern of development continued into the interwar period, after which many old, established manufacturing companies vacated their city buildings for larger premises outside the city.

Like the examples above, the former Thomas Warburton Pty Ltd complex comprises a range of building types (shops and residences and warehouses) built over time. The two-storey shops and residences with a main street frontage (Bourke Street) have slightly ornate rendered façades, whereas the warehousing facilities fronting laneways have plainer face brick finishes. This is typical of the other HO examples.

Although some of the buildings developed for Thomas Warburton Pty Ltd at this site have been lost, the complex has high integrity as a substantial collection of buildings that provide tangible evidence of an important pattern of development in central Melbourne.

#### *Individual buildings in the former Thomas Warburton Pty Ltd complex*

384-386 Bourke Street is a substantially intact example of what was originally a pair of modest two-storey shops and residences constructed in the pre-boom period in 1865-66. Completed in 1887 during the boom period for the same owner, 365-367 Little Bourke Street represents the later tendency towards more excessive and elaborate Italianate style detailing. Both the Bourke Street and Little Bourke Street buildings, in terms of scale, are comparable low scale shop and warehouse buildings constructed in the latter half of the nineteenth century, when the Italianate styling was a favoured style of choice for local architects and builders.



The following examples are comparable with different buildings that comprise the former Thomas Warburton complex at 384-386 Bourke Street and/or 365-367 Little Bourke Street, being of a similar scale, style, construction date and/or use. The below images and descriptions are provided by CoMMaps unless stated otherwise, with images dated c2000 or later.

*66-70 Bourke Street, 1860 (HO534, Significant in HO500 Bourke Hill Precinct)*

66-70 Bourke Street is a row of three two-storey rendered shops. Numbers 66 and 70 are significant in HO500. All three buildings have altered ground level.



Figure 17. 66-70 Bourke Street, built in 1860.

*Bourke Street East Post Office, 35-37 Bourke Street, 1872 (HO527, HO500 Bourke Hill Precinct)*

35 Bourke Street is a two-storey rendered brick shop, built 1872.



Figure 18. 35-37 Bourke Street built in 1872.

*582-584 Little Collins Street, 1873 (Interim HO1279 – Recommended as significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review)*

This two-storey commercial building was erected by businessman, colonial magistrate and St Kilda councillor William Welshman in 1873. Designed by prominent architects Crouch & Wilson, the building retains much of the high-quality detailing to its front façade.





Figure 19. 582-584 Little Collins Street, built in 1873.

*Former Gordon Building, 384-386 Flinders Lane, 1885 & 1888 (Interim HO1271 – Recommended as significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review)*

Also designed by architect Frederick Williams, 384-386 Flinders Lane was built as office accommodation. The distinctive four-storey (plus basement) office building was originally built as two-storeys (plus basement) in 1885, with an additional two-storeys built several years later in 1888. The cohesive arrangement of elements such as arched windows openings, moulded cornices and parapet detailing results in an integrated Italianate façade.



Figure 20. 384-386 Flinders Lane, constructed 1885 and 1888. (Source: Context 2017)

*239 Lonsdale Street (HO507)*

A three-storey late Victorian building possibly constructed as one of a pair. Retail at ground level. Paired windows on each level, with intact 'Italianate' styling to the upper façade.



Figure 21. 239 Lonsdale Street, unknown build date. (Source: CoMMaps)

*Former Wilson's shop & residence, 299 Elizabeth Street, 1885 (HO1017)*

A three-storey rendered brick shop and former residence. Designed in the Italian Renaissance Revival style and built for Charles Wilson in 1885.



Figure 22. 299 Elizabeth Street, constructed 1885. (Source: CoMMaps)

The two-storey building at 384-386 Bourke Street is a largely intact example of a modestly scaled mid-Victorian-period pair of shops and residences. Demonstrating a refined design in its Italianate style features derived from classical architecture, the building is closely comparable with a number of other HO listed mid-Victorian examples, near the eastern end of Bourke Street. Comparable examples include 51-53 Bourke Street (1860s), 66-70 Bourke Street (1860) and the Bourke Street East Post Office at 35-37 Bourke Street (1872). 31-35 Bourke Street and 66-70 Bourke Street have a similar level of intactness when compared with the subject building in Bourke Street. The Bourke Street building is also comparable to slightly later pre-boom period examples such as 582-584 Little Collins Street and 359-363 Lonsdale Street (recommended as significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review).

The three-storey building at 365-367 Little Bourke Street is a largely intact example of a narrow-fronted late Victorian-period pair of shops with annexed warehouses to the rear. Architecturally, the Little Bourke Street building compares favourably with the HO-listed examples above. Having three or more floor levels and a narrow street frontage, 299 Elizabeth Street, 239 Lonsdale Street and 384-386 Flinders Lane exhibit similar stylistic elements that were popular in the mid- to late Victorian period. Like the Little Bourke Street building of interest, both 299 Elizabeth Street and 239 Lonsdale Street have been altered at ground-level. The design of 365-367 Little Bourke Street represents the shift to more excessively ornamented Italianate style designs over the less ornate variations of earlier decades. This change of taste, influenced by the economic prosperity of the time, was expressed through a building's features such as alternating window shapes on each floor level and more diverse use of classical motifs.

Similar to 365-367 Little Bourke Street, the warehouses in Warburton and Rankins lanes feature fine attention to details, observed in the quoining-like bichrome brick work and splayed edges around openings, for example. Built in the rear service laneways as part of a large hardware manufacturing, wholesaling and retailing complex, the 1912 three-storey face brick warehouses are substantially intact as a group of utilitarian Federation period warehouse buildings that exhibit influences of Neo Romanesque style architecture.

Overall, architecturally, the subject buildings that were part of the Thomas Warburton complex are relatively intact examples of their respective time periods and type.

## 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 extension to HO1052, 365-367 Little Bourke Street, Melbourne.

Amend HO1052 (365-367 Little Bourke Street, Melbourne) to reflect the following changes:

- Apply HO1052 (365-367 Little Bourke Street, Melbourne) to the former Thomas Warburton complex of buildings at 384-386 Bourke Street, and the 1912 warehouses in 2-6 and 8-14 Rankins Lane, Melbourne.
- Change the entry in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay to 'Former Thomas Warburton Pty Ltd complex, 365-367 Little Bourke Street, 384-386 Bourke Street and 2-6 and 8-14 Rankins Lane, Melbourne'.
- Amend the map for HO1052 to match the changes noted above.

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**

C (384-386 Bourke Street)  
C (365-367 Little Bourke Street)  
C (2-4 & 6-8 Rankins Lane)

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 1993**

C (384-386 Bourke Street)  
C (365-367 Little Bourke Street)  
C (2-4 & 6-8 Rankins Lane)

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

Ungraded (384-386 Bourke Street)  
C (365-367 Little Bourke Street)  
Ungraded (2-4 & 6-8 Rankins Lane)

---

**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011**

Ungraded (384-386 Bourke Street)  
C (365-367 Little Bourke Street)  
Ungraded (2-4 & 6-8 Rankins Lane)

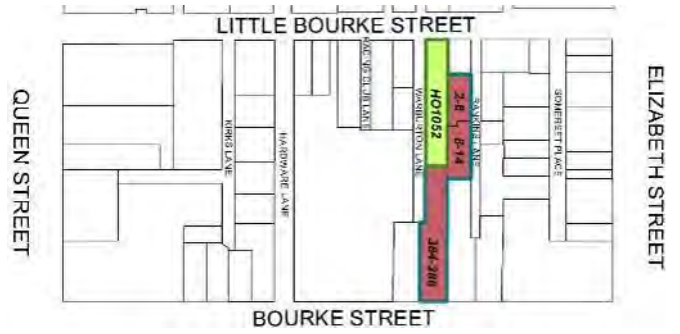
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### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Former Thomas Warburton Pty Ltd complex



**PS ref no:** HO1052





### What is significant?

384-386 Bourke Street, 365-367 Little Bourke Street and 2-6 and 8-14 Rankins Lane, Melbourne, the former Thomas Warburton Pty Ltd complex comprising buildings constructed over stages in 1865, 1887 and 1912.

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

- **eThe** original two-storey form and scale, original loadbearing brick walls finished with painted render, and pattern of openings on the upper level, as well as the Italianate style decorative details including pilaster, cornices, parapet with open balustrade, central pediment and key stones (384-386 Bourke Street);
- **eO** original three-storey form and scale incorporating rear warehouses, original loadbearing brick walls finished with painted render (street frontage), original loadbearing face brick walls with bichrome detailing (along Warburton Lane), pattern of openings on the upper level façade, pattern of openings on the Warburton Lane elevation including the cement sills with brackets and splayed edges (except for the altered ground level openings and rectangular upper level openings) as well as the Italianate style decorative details including pilasters, cornices, flat parapet with dentilation below, alternated windows shapes with rendered surrounds and key stones (365-375 Little Bourke Street); ~~and~~
- **eO** original three-storey form and scale, original loadbearing face brick walls, and patterns of openings on the upper level, bays divided by plain pilasters and terminated with semi-circular arches, recessed spandrels, corbel heads, reinforced concrete lintels, and other original or early details such as hoists, any original timber or steel window frames and sets of double doors including those on the loading doors (rear of 384-386 Bourke Street in Warburton Lane, and 2-6 and 8-14 Rankins Lane).

Later changes, including alterations to the ground-level shopfronts (384-386 Bourke Street and 365-367 Little Bourke Street), new projected signages (384-386 Bourke Street), and infill of ground-level openings (rear of 384-386 Bourke Street), are not significant.



### **How it is significant?**

---

The complex of buildings at 384-386 Bourke Street, 365-367 Little Bourke Street and 2-6 and 8-14 Rankins Lane, Melbourne, is of local historic and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

### **Why it is significant?**

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The complex of buildings at 384-386 Bourke Street, 365-367 Little Bourke Street, 2-6 and 8-14 Rankins Lane, constructed over stages in 1865, 1887 and 1912 by Thomas Warburton Pty Ltd is historically significant. Developed and owned by a single company, the group of adjoining buildings provide important tangible evidence of the evolution of a prominent business in this area of central Melbourne that was known for horse bazaars, ironmongery and hardware merchants from the 1840s. A notable ironmonger and hardware supplier, Thomas Warburton established his business at 384-386 Bourke Street in 1865, buying a block running through to Little Bourke Street, on which the Warburton family gradually developed their business and other warehouses creating an extensive complex that comprised 11 buildings by the mid-1920s. Thomas Warburton Pty Ltd was directly associated with the site for more than 100 years. Thomas Warburton Pty Ltd was one of the key manufacturing and wholesaling businesses that once thrived in the immediate area. The company survives today as Thomas Warburton Pty Ltd, owned by the multinational Würth Group. (Criterion A)

The former Thomas Warburton Pty Ltd complex is significant as a representative example of a building complex associated with manufacturing and wholesaling, which was once common in central Melbourne but is now unusual. Developed for the same owner, the complex retains a substantial cluster of buildings that are reflective of their respective types (shops with residences above, storage and warehouses) and time periods (mid- and late Victorian and Federation/Edwardian periods). The design aesthetics of each respective time period is reflected in the designs of each building in the complex. The 1865 building at 384-386 Bourke Street is an early example of Italianate style shop and residence building in central Melbourne. Sharing similar stylistic elements, the design of 365-367 Little Bourke Street represents a shift in preference towards highly ornamented designs over the more plainly decorated variations of the earlier decades. The rear three-storey warehouses fronting Warburton and Rankins lanes are representative of Federation-era face red brick warehouses with utilitarian characteristics. Overall, the former Thomas Warburton Pty Ltd complex is highly important as a collection of substantially intact buildings that provide tangible evidence of an important pattern of development in central Melbourne. (Criterion D)

### **Primary source**

---

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



# HODDLE GRID HERITAGE REVIEW

## VOLUME 2b: Postwar Thematic Environmental History and postwar places

July 2020,  
[updated March 2022](#)



Prepared for  
City of Melbourne



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Context  
2020

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Project Team:

**Context**

**GJM Heritage**

**On Country Heritage and Consulting**

**Ochre Imprints**

**Spatial Vision**

## Report Register

This report register documents the development and issue of the report entitled *Hoddle Grid Heritage Review – Volume 2b: Postwar Thematic Environmental History and postwar places* undertaken by Context in accordance with our internal quality management system. (Volume 2b was also undertaken in consultation with GJM Heritage.)

Project No.	Issue No.	Notes/description	Issue Date	Issued to
2340	1	Hoddle Grid Heritage Review – Volume 2b: Postwar Thematic Environmental History and postwar places	3.7.2020	City of Melbourne
<a href="#">2340</a>	<a href="#">1</a>	<a href="#">Revised Hoddle Grid Heritage Review – Volume 2b: Postwar Thematic Environmental History and postwar places</a>	<a href="#">23.3.2022</a>	<a href="#">City of Melbourne</a>

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# CONTENTS

<b>POSTWAR THEMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY 1945-1975</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
Melbourne in the Postwar Period	5
Hoddle Grid Postwar Thematic Environmental History	6
Abbreviations	8
<b>Thematic Environmental History</b>	<b>9</b>
1.0 Shaping the urban landscape	9
2.0 Governing, administering and policing the city	17
3.0 Building a commercial city	19
4.0 Creating a functioning city	21
5.0 Living in the city centre	24
6.0 Working in the city	27
7.0 Shaping cultural life	28
8.0 Enjoying the city	33
10.0 Preserving and celebrating the city's history	35
<b>References</b>	<b>36</b>
Primary sources	36
Secondary sources	36
<b>Appendix 1</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>INDIVIDUAL POSTWAR PLACE CITATIONS</b>	<b>41</b>
194-200 Bourke Street, Melbourne	43
253-267 Bourke Street, Melbourne	57
376-378 Bourke Street, Melbourne	81
457-471 Bourke Street, Melbourne	99
468-470 Bourke Street, Melbourne	125
527-555 Bourke Street, Melbourne	141
589-603 Bourke Street, Melbourne	177
13-15 Collins Street, Melbourne	201
18-22 Collins Street, Melbourne	217
56-64 Collins Street, Melbourne	237
100-104 Collins Street, Melbourne	261
221-231 Collins Street, Melbourne	283
251-257 Collins Street, Melbourne	307
265-269 Collins Street, Melbourne	331
276-278 Collins Street, Melbourne	349
303-317 Collins Street, Melbourne	369
308-336 Collins Street, Melbourne	393
344-350 Collins Street, Melbourne	421
359-373 Collins Street, Melbourne	447
375-383 Collins Street, Melbourne	471
404-406 Collins Street, Melbourne	495
430-442 Collins Street, Melbourne	513
454-456 Collins Street, Melbourne	535
468-478 Collins Street, Melbourne	561
516-520 Collins Street, Melbourne	587

VOLUME 2B: POSTWAR THEMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY AND POSTWAR PLACES

---

1-5 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne	607
136-144 Exhibition Street, Melbourne	633
174-192 Exhibition Street, Melbourne	659
287-293 Exhibition Street, Melbourne	687
376-382 Flinders Land, Melbourne	705
258-264 Little Bourke Street, Melbourne	725
130-134 Little Collins Street, Melbourne	749
335-349 Little Collins Street, Melbourne	773
457-469 Little Collins Street, Melbourne	807
588-600 Little Collins Street, Melbourne	831
402-408 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne	851
414-416 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne	871
447-453 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne	889
43-51 Queen Street, Melbourne	917
85-91 Queen Street, Melbourne	937
103-105 Queen Street, Melbourne	961
111-129 Queen Street, Melbourne	981
155-161 Queen Street, Melbourne	1007
158-172 Queen Street, Melbourne	1031
184-192 Queen Street, Melbourne	1067
221-231 Queen Street, Melbourne	1095
233-243 Queen Street, Melbourne	1123
2-18 Ridgway Place, Melbourne	1147
114-120 Russell Street, Melbourne	1165
93-101 Spring Street, Melbourne	1183
199-207 Spring Street, Melbourne	1201
45-63 Swanston Street, Melbourne	1217
114-128 William Street, Melbourne	1243
178-188 William Street, Melbourne	1265
269-275 William Street, Melbourne	1287



## LIST OF TECHNICAL VOLUMES

The Hoddle Grid Heritage Review is reported in a **Summary Report** and a series of technical volumes as follows:

### **Volume 1: Built & Urban Heritage – Methodology**

Volume 1 explains the methodology used to select and assess the heritage values of precincts and individual places identified by the City of Melbourne and others as requiring assessment. This Volume also presents the steps undertaken to ensure that all likely heritage places have been identified and either assessed within the present project or recommended for future assessment.

### **Volume 2: Built and Urban Heritage – Assessed Places & Precincts**

Volume 2 contains heritage assessments and recommendations for individual places and precincts. The material is in the form of citations suited to the recognition of a place on the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay in the Melbourne Planning Scheme. Volume 2 is divided into two volumes:

- Volume 2a – Precincts, pre-1945 places, revisions to existing individual Heritage Overlay
- Volume 2b – Postwar Thematic Environmental History and postwar places

### **Volume 3: Aboriginal Heritage**

Volume 3 explains the approach to Aboriginal heritage for the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review. It explores the concept of shared heritage, the scope of contemporary Aboriginal heritage and the policy context. It describes the important role played by the three Traditional Owner organisations. Volume 3 explains the thematic analysis that was applied in framing the history (Volume 4) and describes how places were identified, mapped and an expanded Aboriginal Places List created. It also briefly outlines the pre-contact Aboriginal archaeological component. Through a co-research model, the three Traditional Owner organisations selected and researched specific places, and these are presented in this volume along with recommendations for recognition and interpretation of Aboriginal history and values. One place is recommended for inclusion in Heritage Overlay and the citation is therefore presented in Volume 2.

### **Volume 4: Aboriginal History – Hoddle Grid**

Volume 4 presents a history of the Hoddle Grid study area in relation to Aboriginal history, connections and places. It builds on an earlier project (Context, 2010), adopts an Aboriginal and shared history thematic framework, develops each theme briefly and identifies place examples. The three Traditional Owner organisations recognised by the City of Melbourne (CoM) have been involved in reviewing the themes and identifying associated places.

### **Volume 5: Pre-Contact Aboriginal Archaeology of Hoddle Grid**

Volume 5 presents an analysis of the pre-contact Aboriginal archaeology across the Hoddle Grid study area, considering prior land and water forms, vegetation and other factors that influenced Aboriginal land uses and activities over the estimated 40,000 years of Aboriginal occupation of south-eastern Australia. This information is then related to the evidence that has been uncovered through recent archaeological excavations. The result is a spatial model designed to predict the likelihood of uncovering evidence of pre-contact Aboriginal sites within the Hoddle Grid area. The model also considers past ground disturbance. It is designed so that it can be regularly updated. The model has been discussed with Traditional Owners and key government bodies, and recommendations are made on how to increase the assessment and management of Aboriginal cultural heritage ahead of redevelopment in the Hoddle Grid study area.



**Volume 6: Communications & Engagement**

Volume 6 documents the development and implementation of a Communications and Engagement Plan for the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review. Specific elements of engagement are detailed including the involvement of both internal and external stakeholders, engagement with Traditional Owner Organisations, the Participate Melbourne and Melbourne Conversations activities and the opportunities to develop interactive digital and other forms of public information.

**ABBREVIATIONS**

AHC	Australian Heritage Council
AV	Aboriginal Victoria
BP	Before Present
CASM	Corporate Affairs and Strategic Marketing
CBD	Central Business District
CHMP	Cultural Heritage Management Plan
CoM	City of Melbourne
ERG	External Reference Group
HCV	Heritage Council of Victoria
HERMES	Victoria's Heritage Database supported by Heritage Victoria
HO	Heritage Overlay
HV	Heritage Victoria
KHT	Koorie Heritage Trust
MMRA	Melbourne Metro Rail Authority
MMBW	Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works
VAHR	Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register
VHI	Victorian Heritage Inventory
VHR	Victorian Heritage Register

# **POSTWAR THEMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY 1945-1975**

# City of Melbourne Hoddle Grid Heritage Review

Postwar Thematic Environmental History 1945-1975

March 2020

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*Figure 1. Aerial view of Melbourne, 1959 (State Library of Victoria H2016.33/35)*

# Contents

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<b>POSTWAR THEMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY 1945-1975</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
Melbourne in the Postwar Period	5
Hoddle Grid Postwar Thematic Environmental History	6
Abbreviations	8
<b>Thematic Environmental History</b>	<b>9</b>
1.0 Shaping the urban landscape	9
1.1 Foundations of town planning in Melbourne's city centre	9
1.2 City of Melbourne's first planning scheme	9
1.3 Plot ratios and development outcomes	10
1.4 Site consolidation	10
1.5 Abandoning height controls and building higher	12
1.6 Campaigning for a better Melbourne	13
1.7 Diversifying the city centre	13
1.8 Expressing an architectural style	14
1.9 Beyond the curtain wall	14
1.10 Brutalism and brickwork	15
1.11 Overseas influences	15
2.0 Governing, administering and policing the city	17
2.1 Commonwealth government	17
2.2 State government	17
3.0 Building a commercial city	19
3.1 Manufacturing	19
3.2 Business and finance	19
3.3 Retail decline and revitalisation in the city centre	19
4.0 Creating a functioning city	21
4.1 Planning for cars	21
4.2 Planning for public transport	22
4.3 Providing health and welfare services	22
5.0 Living in the city centre	24
5.1 Housing and lodging	24
5.2 Hotels	25
6.0 Working in the city	27
6.1 Working life	27
7.0 Shaping cultural life	28
7.1 Arts and creative life in the city	28
7.2 Belonging to an ethnic or cultural group	28
7.3 Protests and activism	29
7.4 City Square debates	30
8.0 Enjoying the city	33
8.1 Expressing civic pride	33
8.2 Melbourne's introduction to the world stage	33
8.3 Entertainment and socialising	34
10.0 Preserving and celebrating the city's history	35
10.1 Conserving the urban environment	35

<b>References</b>	<b>36</b>
Primary sources	36
Secondary sources	36
<b>Appendix 1</b>	<b>40</b>



## Introduction

### Melbourne in the Postwar Period

*Between 1950 and 1970, Melbourne became – for the first time since the 1880s – the fastest growing city in Australia. Perhaps more than any other Australian city, it exemplified the Fordist paradigm of urban growth – high investment in manufacturing, especially of protected consumer products such as cars and electrical goods, high levels of immigration, high levels of car and home ownership and high levels of government intervention in the provision of infrastructure. Melbourne became the main beachhead of American economic and cultural influence, and the leading centre of modernist innovation in art, architecture and design.*

Graeme Davison, 'Welcoming the World: the 1956 Olympic Games and the re-presentation of Melbourne' in J Murphy and J Smart (eds), *The Forgotten Fifties: aspects of Australian society and culture in the 1950s*, p. 65.

The twentieth century represented Australia's coming of age. The post-World War II period was intrinsically linked to the concepts of progress, prosperity and expansion. Governments across the country became official patrons for this notion of progress, which became increasingly associated with a modern aesthetic in art, architecture and design. European and American influences on architecture in particular became an optimistic expression of post-war recovery – a vision of progress towards a brighter and better future (Lewi & Goad 2019:22-24).

For Melbourne, the years between 1945 and 1975 were characterised by great social, cultural and physical transformation. In the immediate postwar years, Melbourne was a city 'in the doldrums' (Lewis et al 1993:203). Building activity was at a standstill and an atmosphere of stagnation hung over its centre. An editorial in the *Herald* lamented that 'too many old, two-storey buildings front our main streets' while influential architect, Robyn Boyd, denounced 'the commercial slums of the city', despairing at the lack of office space and the 'derelict little buildings' that populated the city centre (*Herald* 21 March 1955:3).

The 1950s heralded dramatic changes. As author and historian, Robyn Annear, attests, it was at this time that:

*Melbourne was being remade. It was always being remade, but from the mid-1950s the city was falling over itself in the pursuit of progress* (Annear 2014:xi).

This was a period of great optimism and energy – the lifting of constraints on building materials in 1952 and the gradual recovery of Melbourne's economy brought a new-found confidence to the city. The rise of car ownership, the introduction of television to Australia, the hosting of the Olympic Games, and the arrival of a million immigrants from Europe and the UK over a 20-year period contributed to the substantial cultural, social and physical transformation of the city (MV).

The explosion of construction from 1953 onwards was a dramatic turning point in the evolution of central Melbourne, with the demolition of older buildings considered to be a 'sign of progress, prosperity and expansion' (*Port of Melbourne Quarterly* 1958:11-15). In 1959, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that:

*For the five years ended September 30 last year (1959), the MCC handled building applications valued at nearly 52 million pounds...In the central business area, 102 buildings were erected during the five years. Prominent among these were those erected by large companies as their Australian headquarters, which evidenced the confidence of business enterprise in the future of Australia and of Melbourne in particular* (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 May 1960:5).

During this period, Melbourne asserted itself as a forward-looking international city by embracing the new-found architectural language of Chicago and New York and rejecting the applied decoration of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by the steel and glass office tower design in the United States, stood in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne.

Part motivated by a surging national pride, and part driven by the need to provide increased accommodation and lettable space for the expanding city, the introduction of the postwar office block transformed the skyline of Melbourne and its patterns of land use (Taylor 2001:18). Tall office buildings became an internationally recognised symbol of Melbourne's aspiration for expansion and prosperity (Taylor 2001:58). The scale and modernity of Melbourne's new buildings reflect the city's belief in its economic and commercial future and the rejection of its small-scale manufacturing and retailing past.

Australia had settled into a new, more independent sense of national pride and identity removed from British antecedents by the mid-1960s. Melbourne had successfully hosted the 1956 Olympic Games, which brought maturity and growth for the city, as well as a role on the international stage, while the introduction of television in the 1950s led to a growing interest and concern for international affairs and global issues.

The physical fabric of Melbourne continued to evolve apace. The sharp rise in car ownership altered the city's layout and appearance through the introduction of multi-level carparks, parking meters and garages, as well as the construction of road infrastructure to provide vehicular access to the city centre. It also influenced the relocation of manufacturing and retailing services outside the city centre (Marsden 2000:41-42).

In 1970, the construction boom showed little signs of slowing down, with the *Age* reporting that:

*the building rate in Melbourne's Golden Mile business area is booming this year and is already a record. The City Council has issued permits for buildings valued at \$107,585,000 – double the value of the previous year record year 1966 and triple last year's permits (Age 15 June 1970:3).*

It was this building boom of the late 1960s and early 1970s that began to turn the tide on wholesale demolition and development and focused people's attention on what was being lost in Melbourne's city centre. As Rodney Davidson, former chair and president of the National Trust in Victoria and founding chair of the Historic Buildings Preservation Council, noted in 1979:

*until about 1971 it was difficult to get people interested in conservation issues. Then suddenly Melbourne woke up one morning and found there was a big hole where the Paris end used to be...it was that more than anything which brought home the consequences of extravagant development (Age 12 April 1979:15).*

This growing concern to preserve elements of Melbourne's past ultimately led to reforms to planning schemes and the establishment of registers to protect historic buildings that continue to exist today.

## Hoddle Grid Postwar Thematic Environmental History

The *Hoddle Grid Postwar Thematic Environmental History 1945-1975* (the Postwar TEH) has been prepared to document and illustrate how various themes have shaped the environment and culture of central Melbourne following World War II. In this way, the Postwar TEH provides a context for postwar heritage places that have been identified within the Central Business District of the City of Melbourne as part of the *Hoddle Grid Heritage Review* (2020).

This Postwar TEH builds on an earlier version prepared by Context titled *Post-World War Two Thematic History* for the City of Melbourne.

The Hoddle Grid Heritage Review study area extends slightly beyond Robert Hoddle's surveyed grid. The boundary encompasses a section of the Yarra River or Birrarung, recognising that the history of the Hoddle Grid is inextricably linked to the presence of the river and that the grid plan is aligned with its course. In the west, the study area boundary goes to Wurundjeri Way, including the railway and part of the former Batman's Hill, one of several hills that gave the city landscape its particular shape. To the north-east it extends to A'Beckett and Victoria Streets (Context 2018:2).

The Postwar TEH is arranged thematically, with themes consistent with those of the *Thematic History – A History of the City of Melbourne's Urban Environment*, prepared by Context in 2012. The following text provides an explanation for the role of the 2012 Thematic History, and it equally applies to the purpose and function of the Postwar TEH:

The role of the Thematic Environmental History is not to provide a comprehensive account of the social and economic history of the municipality. It is intended to be a concise document that takes a broad-brush approach, setting out the key themes that have influenced the historical development of a municipality and helping to explain how and why the built and human-influenced environments of that municipality look as they do today. A thematic environmental history is an essential part of a municipality heritage study, helping ensure that the places that reflect and represent the historical development of the municipality are recognised.

The Heritage Victoria publication *Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes* highlights what is distinctive about Victoria, and offers a guide to the development and use of themes in local thematic environmental histories. Appendix 1 compares the themes developed for this thematic environmental history with the framework of Victoria-wide themes.

This thematic environmental history is arranged around the selected themes, using these themes as chapters. It does not follow an overall chronological order, although within each chapter the narrative may progress in a linear fashion. The process of determining historical themes has been similar to that undertaken for any other thematic municipal history, in that a large amount of secondary material has been drawn on in researching land-use patterns, and economic and social developments. The vast quantity of available literature relating to the history of the City of Melbourne provides a valuable, if somewhat overwhelming, resource; the archives of the City of Melbourne (now housed at PROV) are a significant collection in themselves. It has not been possible to use all of this material to prepare this report, but a selection of the available resources has been drawn on.

Following each sub-theme, the report lists examples of places and objects to help the reader understand the connection between the identified historical themes and the tangible places and objects in the City of Melbourne that relate to each theme. This is an indicative list only, for the purpose of demonstrating the different kinds of places that might relate to the different themes.

No thematic environmental history can ever be considered complete. As more research is undertaken, evidence is uncovered through heritage studies, as community stories are told and as social perspectives change, new aspects of a locality's history will inevitably emerge (Context 2012:vi-vii).

The Postwar TEH is divided into the following historic themes, drawn from the 2012 Thematic History:

- 1.0 Shaping the urban landscape
- 2.0 Governing, administering and policing the city
- 3.0 Building a commercial city
- 4.0 Creating a functioning city
- 5.0 Living in the city
- 6.0 Working in the city
- 7.0 Shaping cultural life
- 8.0 Enjoying the city
- 9.0 Preserving and celebrating the city's history

These themes are discussed more fulsomely below, as they relate to the Melbourne Central Business District in the postwar period (1945-1975).

## Abbreviations

CBD	Central Business District
CDA	City Development Association
CoM	City of Melbourne
DELWP	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
MCC	Melbourne City Council
MMBW	Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works
NTAV	National Trust of Australia (Victoria)
PROV	Public Record Office Victoria
SLV	State Library of Victoria
VHD	Victorian Heritage Database

## Thematic Environmental History

### 1.0 Shaping the urban landscape

#### 1.1 Foundations of town planning in Melbourne's city centre

*The first phase in the centre's postwar history...involved neither development nor redevelopment but an artificially-prolonged period of stasis due to prolonged wartime controls. This was reflected in the mixture of land uses, low-scale and 'pre-modernist' architecture, and the low-key city life...What this means in heritage terms is that much of the prewar city centre, even the colonial city centre, survived intact until the 1960s (Marsden 2000:57).*

Australian interest in town planning, and the concept of national planning in particular, developed significantly after World War II (Marsden 2000:65). At the height of the war, the Commonwealth Government had been concerned with the poor regulations surrounding the development of Australia's capital cities and threatened to withhold vital housing funding for states without appropriate planning legislation. Consequently, the Victorian Government approved the *Town and Country Planning Act 1944*. This Act gave local councils voluntary powers to prepare and administer (either alone or jointly with another council) local planning schemes. Under these schemes, councils could prescribe the use and development of land within their municipality. Importantly, Interim Development Orders (IDOs) were introduced, which acted as stopgap controls until a scheme was approved or amended (Leskovec nd:277-278).

The Town and Country Planning Board was established under the 1944 Act and commenced operation early in 1946. The Board was established to report to and advise the Minister of Public Works on the planning provisions outlined in the Act. These provisions marked the beginning of statutory planning in Victoria (Public Record Office Victoria).

In 1949 the state parliament passed the *Town and Country Planning (Metropolitan Area) Act 1949*. This amendment to the principal 1944 Act gave the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) – a public utility board established in 1891 to provide water supply, sewerage and sewage treatment functions for the City of Melbourne – the power to prepare and administer a planning scheme for a defined metropolitan area in Melbourne. The Town and Country Planning Board's role was to advise on the planning schemes drafted by the MMBW (Leskovec nd:278-279). The metropolitan region would broadly incorporate municipalities within a 15-mile (24km) radius of the central city, with a 25-mile (40km) extension to take in the Frankston area. E F Borrie, the MMBW sewerage engineer, was appointed chief planner.

The *Melbourne Planning Scheme Report* prepared by the MMBW was released in 1954. It was subsequently translated into the new Melbourne Metropolitan Planning Scheme (MMPS) (Lewis et al 1993:216-17). Its development reflected the postwar expectation that the new era would produce modern, efficient, scientifically planned cities (Howe cited in Marsden 2000:65). The MMPS was publicly submitted in 1954 with an IDO put in place in February 1955. Although the MMPS was formally submitted to the State Government in 1958, it took a further 10 years before a planning scheme for metropolitan Melbourne was formally gazetted (Leskovec nd:278).

#### 1.2 City of Melbourne's first planning scheme

Initially state and local government treated the Melbourne city centre as a central business zone, with little control placed on the construction of office blocks, warehouses and small factories. Therefore, by the early 1960s, the city represented 'almost a purely market-controlled allocation of space and intensity of site use' (John Paterson Urban Systems, 1972). Any development controls, such as those introduced in Melbourne in the mid-1960s, sought to 'tidy up' rather than influence the pattern of city centre activities (Marsden 2000:64).

On 25 October 1961, Melbourne City Council (MCC) resolved to prepare a specific local planning scheme for Melbourne's central city (Town and Country Planning Board of Victoria 1963/1964:26). The person appointed to prepare the inner-city planning scheme was E F Borrie, the chief planner of the 1954 *Melbourne Planning Scheme Report*.

The MMPS was placed on public exhibition in 1964. It became a properly gazetted scheme in May 1968. The central city was given its own Central Business Zone as part of the MMPS but the metropolitan scheme contained minimal information about how it was to be administered. This responsibility was left to the MCC (Ramsay Consulting for DELWP c2016:8).

### 1.3 Plot ratios and development outcomes

E F Borrie's 1964 planning report for central Melbourne drew attention to land use control and zoning, and recommended the implementation of Plot Ratios (Figure 2) (Ramsay Consulting 2012:7-8). The Plot Ratio, or Floor Area Ratio, is the relationship between the total amount of usable floor area that a building has and the total area of the lot on which the building stands. The ratio is determined by dividing the total or gross floor area of the building by the gross area of the lot. A higher ratio is more likely to indicate a denser construction with higher buildings. In 1964, the recommended highest Plot Ratio was 8.1:1 at the corner of William and Collins streets. The lowest recommended Plot Ratio was 1:1 on Elizabeth Street adjacent to the Queen Victoria Market, and at the north end of King Street adjacent to Flagstaff Gardens. Most blocks were set at below 5:1, meaning that for a building that covered the whole site, five storeys would be the maximum height.

The impact of Plot Ratio controls was the consolidation of the traditional city fabric into larger allotments, particularly clustered in the east, and the western hill of Bourke and Collins streets. Base level Plot Ratios were allocated to districts and a bonus system was introduced which allowed for increased floor areas in exchange for open residual (civic) space at ground level, such as plazas and common areas. Specific uses such as 'international standard hotels' could also achieve bonuses (City of Melbourne 2016:5-7). The 'slab' towers of the earlier 1960s with the lift and services core on the property boundary, gave way to the taller and more efficient freestanding towers with a central cores and high efficiency floor plates of up to 2,000 square metres, set back from street frontages via a forecourt, plaza or podium (CoM 2004).



Figure 2. Plot ratios from the 1964 planning report for central Melbourne (Ramsay Consulting 2012:22)

### 1.4 Site consolidation

In the early 1960s, offices comprised more than 40 per cent of Melbourne city addresses (Davison cited in Marsden 2000:58). From the late 1960s, skyscrapers also consumed more land as buildings became taller and wider. Adjacent city properties were purchased and amalgamated to form large redevelopment sites. The creation of these large scale 'superblocks' relied on demolition. Historian, Susan Marsden, writes that by 'combining long-established plots and closing streets the procedure threatened to obliterate street and block patterns dating from the foundation years of the capital cities' (Marsden 2000:60-61).

As a consequence, Melbourne's skyline, its ground level spatial configuration and the 'colourful mix of forms and functions in the nineteenth-century town' (Davison cited in Marsden 2000:57) were 'radically transformed' between 1956 and 1975 (Marsden 2000:57):



*These changes were ascribed to postwar prosperity, to architects' discovery of the International style, and to property and mining booms as well as rising land values. The change was most pronounced at the heart of the financial district near Collins Street where land values soared. As land taxes were tied to the unimproved capital value redevelopment was inevitable. The old urban mix 'gave way to the high-rise uniformity of the corporate bureaucracies in the 1960s' (Dunstan cited in Marsden 2000:58).*

In this period, most of Australia's largest companies, including Broken Hill Proprietary (BHP), Royal Dutch Shell (Shell), Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI), General Motors Holden (GMH), Ansett and their accompanying financiers were established within city centres (Marsden 2000:58). The Conzinc Rio-Tinto building (now demolished) replaced Melbourne Mansions at 89-101 Collins Street in 1963 (Figure 3). Architectural historian, Miles Lewis AM, notes that this curtain walled office building, set back from Collins Street to provide a north facing garden entry, was one of the first high-rise developments to break the building line of Collins Street and set the precedent for providing open space at the ground level of buildings as a 'quid pro quo for various dispensations offered to developers' (Lewis et al 1993:262).



Figure 3. Conzinc-Rio Tinto Building at 95 Collins Street, 1970 (State Library of Victoria, H2011.55/1479)

### 1.5 Abandoning height controls and building higher

During World War II and up to 1953 there was little building activity in Australian city centres. Wartime austerity severely restricted the availability of materials for building, and costs were high. With the various state governments lifting constraints on building materials after 1952, development resumed (Jennifer Taylor 2001:15). As reported in University of Melbourne's Architectural Department's publication *Cross-Section* in 1954:

*All over Australia urban building is lazily awakening. The scene in Melbourne city, which only last year seemed condemned to building inactivity forever, has quite suddenly changed. After 14 years almost without a new building, many major works are now actually under way and several more are in advanced planning (Cross-Section 1954: No 18, Figure 4).*

The following year it was reported that 'Sydney and Melb[ourne] cities' booms reached the stage where each street seemed to have some bldg.(sic) activity' (*Cross-Section* 1955: No 33).

Commercial expansion in central Melbourne had been hindered by a 132 foot (40 metre) height limit that had been enforced since 1916. Many office buildings built precisely to this height limit had been erected in the interwar period, and this continued after the war with the completion of the first postwar example, the new premises for petroleum giant H C Sleigh Ltd at 166-172 Queen Street (Bates, Smart & McCutcheon) in 1953. While some other buildings followed, it was not until the height limit was lifted in 1956 that commercial development in the city boomed. As was later recorded in *Architecture Australia*, no fewer than 30 new multi-storey office buildings were built in and around the city centre between 1955 and 1958 (Heritage Alliance 2008:19-20).

The first city building to exceed the 132 feet limit was the 20-storey (81 metre) ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street, East Melbourne (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1958), located just outside the Hoddle Grid (Figure 5). It was followed by the 26-storey (96 metre) Conzinc Rio-Tinto building at 95 Collins Street (Bernard Evans, 1962, demolished), which retained the title of Melbourne's tallest building until the end of the decade. By then, high-rise development was becoming common, and it was reported in 1973 that buildings of 20 or more storeys were appearing in central Melbourne at a rate of approximately one per year. The title of Melbourne's tallest building changed frequently in the following decades: from Marland House 570 Bourke Street (1971, 121 metres), to BHP House at 140 William Street (1972, 152 metres) to the Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-75, 153 metres) (Heritage Alliance 2008:20).

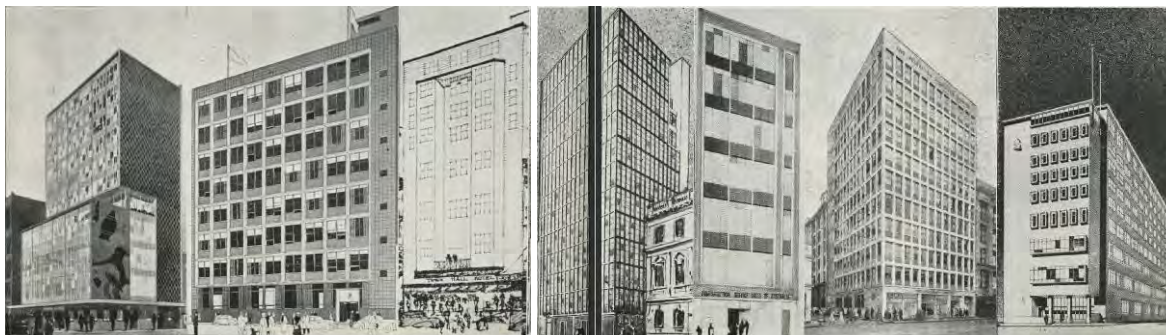


Figure 4. Sketches showing high-rise buildings being constructed in the City of Melbourne, 1954 (*Cross-Section* April 1954, No 18)



Figure 5. Lonsdale Street showing ICI building, Melbourne, Vic. Rose Stereograph Co, 1955 (State Library of Victoria)

### 1.6 Campaigning for a better Melbourne

In November 1953, an activist group, the City Development Association (CDA), was founded to counteract the perceived stagnation of development in central Melbourne in the post-World War II era. As reported in the *Age* at the time, 'for too long Melbourne has been standing still. The time has come for her to reassert herself and to show that the citizens of this generation...can plan and build just as well as their fathers and grandfathers did in making this a truly great city' (*Age* 18 November 1953:2). The CDA included an array of businessmen and professionals in the fields of architecture, planning and academia. Sir Norman Myer of the Myer Emporium was appointed the CDA's first chairman.

Pledging to 'campaign for the necessary action that will relieve or solve many of the worst problems that have overtaken the city and metropolitan area in the last 20 years,' the CDA advocated for such things as civic improvement, slum redevelopment, traffic and parking in the central city, high-rise office towers, and high-density living (*Age* 18 November 1953:2). CDA initiatives included the founding of Moomba, the promotion of 'the Paris End' of Collins Street, the beautification of Flinders Street near the railway station and the development of off-street parking (*Age*, 17 June 1960:6; Dunstan 2008). The CDA was almost disbanded in November 1965 due to lack of funds and despite attempts to revive it, appears to have languished soon after (*Age* 16 November 1965:12; *Age* 30 November 1965:12).

### 1.7 Diversifying the city centre

In the 1970s, the office zone expanded upwards and outwards to encroach on the old wholesaling, light industrial and professional districts (Marsden 2000:58). MCC developed the *City of Melbourne Strategy Plan* in 1974 which focused on the city's overall accessibility (to be improved by the underground rail loop), office employment, government activity, entertainment and character. It also projected a large increase in employment and a moderate increase in housing.

For the central city the Strategy Plan encouraged high-density office development, especially in the vicinity of the proposed underground city railway stations. The central city was divided into three precincts of office, retail and entertainment with Plot Ratio maximums of 10:1, 8:1 and 6:1 respectively and bonuses of up to 2:1 in each. It also recommended the application of 'View Protection Policies' along the western, southern and part of the eastern edges of the Hoddle Grid to preserve views into and out of the central city (Ramsay Consulting 2012:8-10).

Unfortunately, the MCC was contending with weak finances and years of chaotic administration at the time of developing the 1974 Strategy Plan and its implementation consequently failed. Even so, this first attempt to revitalise Melbourne caused an "awakening of public awareness" of the need for urban reform. This led to a successfully implemented Strategy Plan in 1985 (Figaredo 2019).

## 1.8 Expressing an architectural style

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.

## 1.9 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).

### 1.10 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).

### 1.11 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.

1.0 Shaping the urban landscape	
Sub-themes	Examples
Abandoning height controls and building higher	Marland House, 570 Bourke Street (1971) BHP House, 140 William Street (1972) Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-75)

<b>1.0 Shaping the urban landscape</b>	
<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Expressing an architectural style	Gilbert Court, 100-104 Collins Street (1954) Coates House, 18-20 Collins Street (1957)
Beyond the curtain wall	Guardian Building, 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61) Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street (1968-70) Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street (1961-63) Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73 State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street (1967-68) Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building, 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975)
Brutalism and brickwork	Mid City, 194-200 Bourke Street (1969-70) Houston Building, 184-192 Queen Street (1964-65) State Savings Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68) Nubrik House, 269-275 William Street (1972) Total House, 170-190 Russell Street (1966) Hoyts Cinema Centre, 140 Bourke Street (1966-69)
Overseas influences	Park Tower, 199-207 Spring Street (1969) 13-15 Collins Street (1970) AMP Tower & St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street (1965-69)



## 2.0 Governing, administering and policing the city

Public administration related to the government provision of services to Australian cities and states has always been based in capital cities. Government departments increased steadily from the late nineteenth century and continued to be of major importance after World War II (Marsden 2000:82). Architect Miles Lewis argues that public works buildings before 1945 comprised 'restrained and sober metropolitan architecture', whereas after the war, government institutions sought to construct buildings that embodied images of modernity and progress. E F Borrie's 1954 plan for Melbourne, for example, proposed a new layout of major public buildings around Parliament House (Lewis et al 1993:221).

In the postwar period, the number of government offices increased dramatically in city centres due to two phenomena: an expansion in Commonwealth revenue and powers, and the extension of state government responsibilities to include welfare, housing, education, culture, and public transport services (Marsden 2000:83).

### 2.1 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).

### 2.2 State government

Historically state governments have aimed to increase local economic activity by promoting investment in their respective capital city. In the 1960s, state government policy required or encouraged interstate developers and engineering firms to set up subsidiary operations in their own states. In addition, both state and local governments have played a role in the provision of infrastructure for ports, railways, streets, freeways, and underground services, resulting in a concentration of government headquarters in the city centre (Marsden 2000:84-85, 88). However, increasingly, state and federal governments have adopted policies of privatisation, withdrawing from direct provision of infrastructure and services such as telecommunications.

In the 1960s the Treasury Reserve, lying just outside the Hoddle Grid, was transformed by the construction of the Victorian State Offices at 1 Treasury Place and 1 Macarthur Street. An architectural competition was held in 1962 for an office tower to be placed behind the Old Treasury Building. Barry Patten of Yuncken Freeman won the competition with a design for two buildings; a low-scale building directly behind the Old Treasury Building (1 Treasury Place), and a taller tower to the north of matching design (1 Macarthur Street). A third building, to house the State Chemical Laboratories, was constructed to the east of the tower at the same time in the late 1960s. Completed by 1970, the buildings were designed in a modern style and transformed the nineteenth century precinct into a modern, multi-functional complex (VHD Treasury Reserve Precinct).

<b>2.0 Governing, administering and policing the city</b>	
<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Commonwealth government	Telephone Exchange and Post Office, 114-120 Russell Street (1954) Batman Automatic Telephone Exchange, 376-382 Flinders Lane (1957) Commonwealth Arbitration Courts, Little Bourke Street (1959) Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (1964-66) Lonsdale Exchange Building, 447-453 Lonsdale Street (1969) Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building, 359-373 Collins Street (1975)
State government	Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works Head Office, 613-639 Little Collins Street (1973) State Savings Bank, 264 Little Bourke Street (1961)

### 3.0 Building a commercial city

#### 3.1 Manufacturing

From the 1960s, many factories relocated from Melbourne's city centre to the suburbs, although some manufacturing remained until the late 1970s, mainly in the fields of clothing, printing and food processing (Marsden 2000:99). The textile industry was an important sector of central Melbourne's economy, however in Flinders Lane and Flinders Street, crowding and a lack of parking forced this industry into decline from the 1960s (May 2008a). Wilder House, built in 1956 at 41-45 A'Beckett Street, is an example of a purpose-built textile factory from this period.

#### 3.2 Business and finance

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).

#### 3.3 Retail decline and revitalisation in the city centre

Central Melbourne and Central Sydney accounted for approximately one third of Australian metropolitan retail sales in the 1950s. However, the 1950s saw city retailers increasingly struggle to attract consumers from the suburbs, largely due to the increase in car ownership in the postwar period. To counteract this, in 1953 Myer Ltd erected the first multi-storey carpark to be built since World War II in Lonsdale Street. Another carpark, the Grand Central Carpark, opened in Bourke Street soon afterwards (Heritage Alliance 2008:16).

Suburban development and the construction of suburban shopping complexes such as Chadstone Shopping Centre also had a major impact on Melbourne's city centre into the 1960s with traditional businesses including shops, manufacturing and professional services moving to new suburban locations (Spearritt cited in Marsden 2000:49). Several city department stores closed and were demolished or converted to other uses. The Eastern Market (located at the corner of Bourke and Exhibition streets) was demolished in 1960 to make way for the Southern Cross Hotel (now demolished) (Marsden 2000:49).

Some inner-city retailing persisted in this period with Allans and Co opening a new music store at 276-278 Collins Street in 1957 and Myer constructing the Department Aerial Crossover, a four-storey pedestrian bridge over Little Bourke Street designed by longtime Myer architects Tompkins, Shaw and Evans (1963) (Lewis et al 1993:264).

Alliances between government ministers, councillors and traders sought to halt the decline of retail in the Melbourne city centre. Two main strategies emerged: to expedite car access and, from the 1970s, to encourage

pedestrians through, for example, the creation of car-free malls, Sunday trading, and the establishment of open-air markets (Marsden 2000:51-52).

In an effort to revive the city's waning retail economy, a trial closure of Bourke Street between Swanston and Elizabeth streets was introduced in late 1973. This followed discussions between MCC and the Retail Trader's Association. The trial resulted in protests from shop keepers and caused traffic chaos (May 2008c). The 1974 Strategy Plan pursued the concept, encouraging 'the maintenance and growth of the retail areas as the major centre for shopping for the metropolitan area' (City of Melbourne 1974:267), but it was February 1978 before the section was formally closed to through traffic. Policies within the Strategy Plan also aimed to counteract:

*present economic market forces that would force entertainment and retail activities out of the CBD. The mandatory requirements for retail or entertainment floor space will ensure that the variety provided by shops, restaurants or cinemas is maintained (Interplan for CoM 1974:267).*

<b>3.0 Building a commercial city</b>	
<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Business and finance	<p>London Assurance House, 468-470 Bourke Street (1960)</p> <p>Canton Insurance Building, 43-51 Queen Street (1957)</p> <p>Guardian Building, 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61)</p> <p>AMP Tower and St James Building, 527-555 Bourke Street (1965-69)</p> <p>MLC Building, 303-317 Collins Street (c1970-73)</p> <p>BHP House, 140 William Street (1973)</p> <p>AMP Building, 402-408 Lonsdale Street (1956-58)</p> <p>State Savings Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68)</p> <p>Bank of Adelaide Building, 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60)</p> <p>Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73)</p> <p>State Savings Bank, 264 Little Bourke Street (229 Swanston Street) (1961)</p> <p>Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (1964-66)</p> <p>Stock Exchange House, 351-357 Collins Street (1968)</p>
Retail decline and revitalisation	<p>Total House, 170-190 Russell Street (1966)</p> <p>Allans Building, 276-278 Collins Street (1956-57)</p> <p>Myer Department Aerial Crossover, Little Bourke Street (1963)</p> <p>Bourke Street Mall (pedestrianised 1978)</p>

## 4.0 Creating a functioning city

### 4.1 Planning for cars

*In the 1940s and 1950s public transport was still a major contributor to the city's transport needs...[However] motoring interests argued they deserved government support because they took pressure off an overstrained public transport system...By the 1970s...public transport was...justified mainly as a subsidiary service for city-bound commuters and the carless minority of children, women and old people (Davison 2004:128-29).*

Suburbanisation and car ownership increased significantly after World War II and 'city expansion, freed from the restraints of fixed-rail transport, began to accelerate' (Howe, Nichols & Davison 2014:1). In 1911, the Melbourne metropolitan area, around 67,340 hectares, lay within a 16-kilometre radius of the General Post Office; this steadily increased to 80,290 hectares by 1947, and to 210,308 hectares by 1961 (Pryor cited in Marsden 2000:61). In the decade 1947-57 alone, the number of vehicles on Melbourne's roads doubled (Lewis et al 1993:219).

This increase in car ownership and use brought a host of requirements for the city, including freeway access, on-street parking, parking stations (whether above or below ground), premises to sell cars and workshops to repair them. The requirements of cars also influenced the relocation of industry, and the outward expansion and decentralisation of the city (Rymer 2018).

Melbourne was transformed from a public transport-oriented and pedestrian-friendly place into a place where 'the car had taken over the streets' (Marsden 2000:41-42). Traffic signals, road signs and parking meters proliferated, with parking meters first installed in the City of Melbourne in 1955. As a consequence, retailing declined, and much public spending focused on the construction of infrastructure for cars, such as freeways, bridges, car parks, petrol stations, and road widening (Marsden 2000:41-42), including the widening of Elizabeth Street and Kings Way in the 1960s.

In the postwar period the provision of off-street parking became essential to the economic well-being and growth of the city centre and the wider city area. Many at-grade off-street parking spaces were located on sites where buildings had been demolished, however the increasing number of cars led to a recommendation from the City Development Association in 1955 that more off-street parking be provided. Nine car parking stations were recommended, one for each city block. Total House, 170-190 Russell Street, was one such building (Figure 6). The site for the car park was purchased in 1959-61 by the City of Melbourne and tenders were advertised in 1962. The complex, which combined a multi-level car park, offices and a theatre, was designed by architects Bogle Banfield and Associates and opened in 1965 (VHD Total House).



Figure 6. Total House at the corner of Russell and Little Bourke Street, 1966 (State Library of Victoria H91.244/5423)

## 4.2 Planning for public transport

Despite the growth in road transport and car ownership in the postwar period, tram, rail and bus routes established in earlier years continued to direct traffic into city centres. The Melbourne Metropolitan Transport Committee released the Melbourne Transportation Plan in 1969 that recommended the construction of 510 kilometres of freeways, 64 kilometres of arterial roads, three new railway lines, railway extensions, and an underground railway loop (Lewis et al 1993:250).

An underground railway loop had been proposed for Melbourne as early as 1926 as a solution to ease congestion in the city centre, with a former engineer of the railways commenting that other major cities had dealt with their commuter congestion problems by going underground ‘... Melbourne, owing to its undulating contours, was well adapted for such railways’ (*Argus* 17 June 1926:14). Discussions ensued in the following decades until the Victorian Parliament passed the *City of Melbourne Underground Railway Construction Act* in 1960. This Act enabled the construction of a proposed loop, however due to financial constraints, it was a further 10 years before the project commenced.

The project involved the construction of four tunnels running almost the entire length of La Trobe and Spring streets, and three new underground stations: Flagstaff, Museum (later renamed Melbourne Central) and Parliament (Figure 7). Tunnelling works began in 1971 and a tunnel boring machine, nicknamed The Mole, was brought into operation in 1972 to complete the first phase of the loop (Follington 2018). The loop was progressively brought into service from 1981 with the opening of Museum, followed by Parliament Station in 1983 and Flagstaff in 1985 (Carroll 2008).



Figure 7. Proposed Underground Rail Loop station locations included in the Melbourne Metropolitan Transportation Plan, 1969 (Public Record Office Victoria).

## 4.3 Providing health and welfare services

Health, welfare and education services were historically established in Melbourne’s city centre. The Stella Maris Seafarer’s Centre at 588-600 Little Collins Street (1972-73) was one of many charities established as part of the Catholic Church’s official missionary work to provide pastoral care, services and support for seafarers.

The Pharmaceutical Guild, established in Victoria in 1928 to ensure the quality of medicines and to establish a uniform scale of wages for pharmaceutical assistants, constructed a building at 18-22 Francis Street in 1954 to a design by Cowper, Murphy and Appleford. Optometrists, Coles and Garrard, established an office building and consulting rooms at 376 Bourke Street in 1957 to a design by architects Meldrum and Noad.



The Queen Victoria Hospital, established in La Trobe Street in 1896 as the first women's hospital in Victoria, moved to 210 Lonsdale Street in 1946. Its primary aim was to be a hospital 'For Women, By Women'. By 1965 it became the new Monash University's teaching hospital for gynaecology, obstetrics and paediatrics and changed from treating solely female patients to being a 'family hospital'. Renamed the Queen Victoria Medical Centre in 1977, it relocated to the Monash Medical Centre at Clayton in 1989 (Russell 2008).

<b>4.0 Creating a functioning city</b>	
<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Planning for cars	Total House, 170-190 Russell Street (1965)
Planning for public transport	Degraves Street Subway Flinders Street (1956) City Loop Underground Railway (1971-85)
Providing health and welfare services	Pharmaceutical Guild Building, 18-22 St Francis Street (1954) Coles and Garrard Building, 376 Bourke Street (1957) Stella Maris Seafarer's Centre, 488-500 Little Collins Street (1972-73) Methodist Church Centre, 130-134 Little Collins Street (1966-67)

## 5.0 Living in the city centre

### 5.1 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).

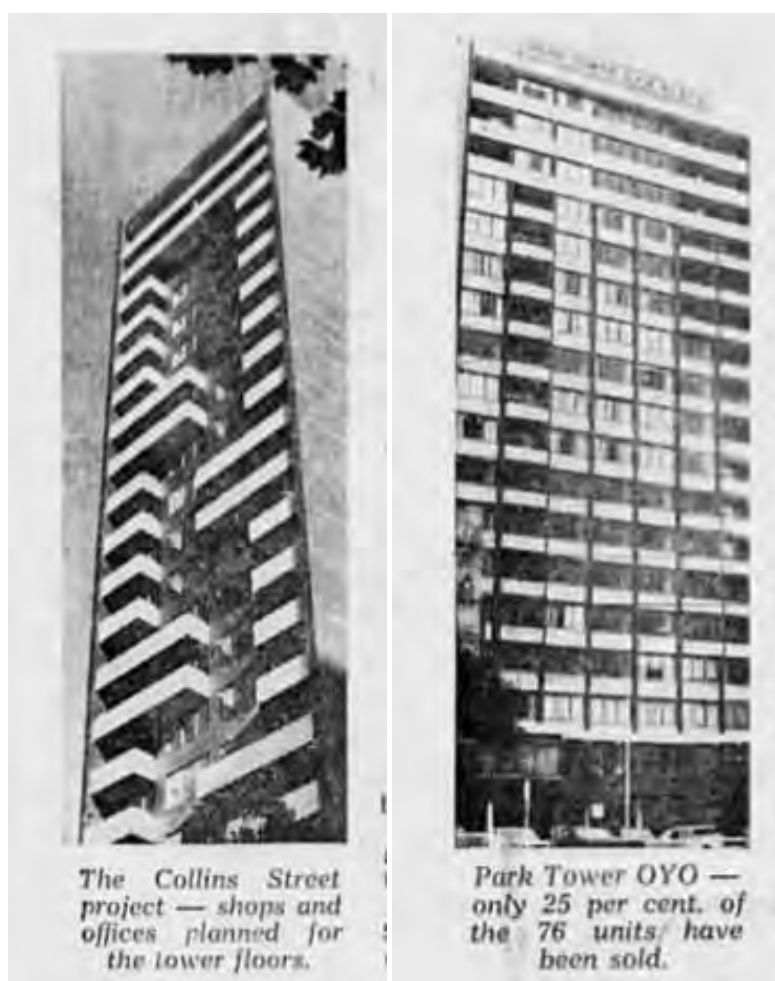


Figure 8. Plans for city apartments reconsidered due to lack of interest, 1971 (*Age* 17 February 1971:3)

## 5.2 Hotels

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

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

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

The Southern Cross Hotel (now demolished) opened in 1962 as Australia's first modern hotel of the jet age – a sign that the city had established itself as an international destination (Annear 2005:186). It occupied a large site on Bourke Street in central Melbourne, formerly occupied by the grand Eastern Market. The hotel, owned by Pan American Airways, set the new standard for city hotels in Melbourne and its central plaza, shopping arcades, and ten-pin bowling alley represented a new concept of public space (Goard). The Southern Cross Hotel remained Melbourne's premier hotel into the early 1980s, famously hosting The Beatles during their 1964 tour and national

events such as the Logies and the Brownlow (Brown-May 2005). The Bryson Centre (now Rydges Hotel), 174-192 Exhibition Street (1970-72), was one of a number of high-rise buildings planned for the eastern end of the city in the early 1970s to 'meet the tourist boom expected with the opening of the new airport at Tullamarine' (*Age* 1970:2). The 23-storey Bryson Centre incorporated office space, a 600-seat cinema, restaurants, convention centres and a 292-room hotel, named Hotel Melbourne, which was located on the upper 13 floors of the building. The Bryson Centre was described by the *Age* as a 'city within a city – every need is either within the hotel walls or within walking distance outside' (*Age* 1972:19).

5.0 Living in the city centre	
Sub-themes	Examples
Housing and lodging	Park Tower, 199-207 Spring Street (1969) 13-15 Collins Street (1970) Treasury Gate, 99-101 Spring Street (1971) Exhibition Towers, 287-293 Exhibition Street (1969-71)
Hotels	Former Hosie's Hotel, 1-5 Elizabeth Street (1954-56) The Bryson Centre (now Rydges Hotel), 174-192 Exhibition Street (1970-72)

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## 6.0 Working in the city

### 6.1 Working life

After World War II, Melbourne's economy gradually recovered and the city consolidated its role as the financial capital of Australia. Banking and stock-broking industries and the associated workforce grew apace and the city's working population occupied the growing number of new city offices.

The number and size of Melbourne's legal firms evolved in line with the city's population and strong economy, and was most heavily concentrated around William Street and the Supreme Court buildings on Lonsdale Street.

Those working in the medical field were mostly based either at the east end of Collins Street, where a large number of private consultants, hospitals and small clinics were located, or in the Carlton / Parkville area where several large public hospitals were established.

Conversely, the number of factories operating in central Melbourne had declined by the middle of the twentieth century. While Flinders Lane remained an important wholesale area for fashion and textiles in the second half of the twentieth century, clothing manufacturing declined. The north-west area of the city remained an area for light industrial and mechanical workshops and there was small-scale manufacturing north and west of Lonsdale Street (Context 2012:72).

## 7.0 Shaping cultural life

### 7.1 Arts and creative life in the city

The Melbourne city centre contains numerous important cultural sites, such as libraries, museums, theatres, art centres, lecture halls, workshops and institutes, and also provides many less formal exhibition and performance spaces.

In the art world, the war years saw an unprecedented growth in the creation of, and interest in, local art, as well as a palpable shift in subject matter away from idyllic pastoral and domestic scenes to social commentaries on life in postwar Melbourne. One of the most enduring and celebrated images of twentieth century Melbourne is John Brack's *Collins Street, 5pm* (1955), which paints a portrait of the monotonous nature of Melbourne's peak hour (Context 2012:75).

The growing interest in local art was supplemented by small-scale, simple exhibition spaces such as Tye's Gallery, a large basement space at the rear of a furniture store in Bourke Street, which was founded in 1945. Artists generally managed their own exhibitions within this space. The establishment of the Stanley Coe Gallery in Bourke Street in 1950 saw the emergence of managed exhibitions of contemporary local art. In 1953 French émigrés Georges and Mirka Mora established Mirka's Gallery in Collins Street, while John Reed established the Gallery of Contemporary Art in 1956. This became the short-lived Museum of Modern Art and Design of Australia in 1958, which utilised exhibiting space at Ball & Welch Department Store in Flinders Street where artist, Arthur Boyd, first showed his 'Bride' series (Galbally 2008).

By the late 1950s contemporary Australian art was becoming highly marketable and a rush of new commercial galleries were established. These were generally established outside the city centre in suburbs including South Yarra, St Kilda and Collingwood (Galbally 2008). The establishment of these galleries away from the city centre was countered by the creation of a permanent, purpose-built building for the National Gallery of Victoria's art collection. The NGV International building, located on St Kilda Road, was designed by architect Sir Roy Grounds and opened to the public in 1968.

Another major Melbourne institution, the State Library of Victoria, was extended in 1961 with the construction of the La Trobe Library (Figure 9 and 10). The aim was to resolve the issue of disunity and gain some coherence and distinction along the north boundary of the city block. The works were completed in 1965 (Lovell Chen 2011:100).

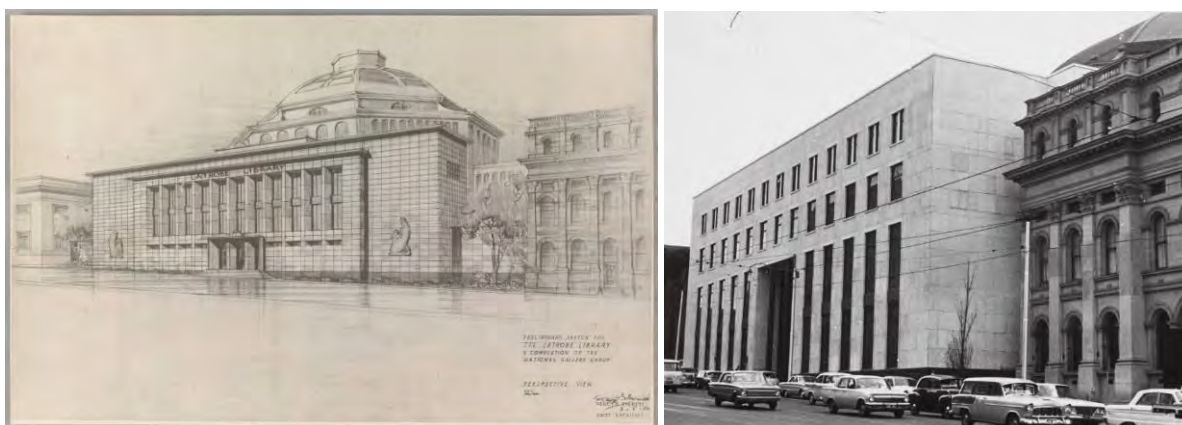


Figure 9 and 10. Preliminary sketch of the proposed La Trobe Library, 1950 and the completed design, 1964 (State Library of Victoria H28187 and H30064)

### 7.2 Belonging to an ethnic or cultural group

The mass immigration of Europeans during the postwar period led Melbourne to become one of the most multi-cultural cities in the world. Italians and Greeks settled in large numbers within the municipality, where they occupied run-down Victorian workers' cottages, and rejuvenated them, often in a Mediterranean style, and established cafes and other places of business (Context 2012).

Melbourne's cosmopolitan café society was established by European migrants, particularly Italians, after World War II. Well-known cafés that opened in the city centre in the 1950s included Pellegrini's at 66 Bourke Street, Mario's café in Little Bourke Street, the sidewalk café operated by the Oriental Hotel at 17 Collins Street and Mirka's Café at the corner of Exhibition and Little Bourke Streets (Hanscombe 2009). In 1975, it was reported that



Melbourne had become the third largest Greek-speaking city in the world and Lonsdale Street became the focus of Greek cafes and other businesses (Lewis et al 1993:239).

Chinese immigrants and investors from South-East Asia have been responsible for the renewal of historical Chinatowns in Australia and in the 1960s new Chinese immigrants helped to revive Melbourne's own Chinatown. Assisted by the City Development Association, a Chinatown Development Association was established and a proposal tabled to decorate Little Bourke Street with lanterns, banners and Chinese murals on shop fronts (*Age* 9 July 1959:12). Meanwhile, the See Yup Society – a society for Chinese citizens – opened a new building in Little Bourke Street in 1965, which provided shops and accommodation for Chinese classes, dances and clan meetings (*Age* 30 April 1966:5).

### 7.3 Protests and activism

Following the commencement of the Vietnam War in 1955, the Australian Government pledged its support to the United States. In 1965 it sent conscripted young men into overseas service, and subsequently instigated the greatest social and political dissent in Australia since the conscription referendums of World War I (Australian [War Memorial](#)). The Women's Liberation Movement also gained momentum during this period.

The 1960s and 1970s were rife with protest. Within central Melbourne, significant events included the Vietnam moratoria organised by Jim Cairns of the Vietnam Moratorium Campaign in 1970, when more than 70,000 people marched through the city of Melbourne to protest against Australia's participation in the war (Marsden 2000:107). Melbourne was also the scene of one of the first anti-conscription protests, which took place at the Melbourne National Service office in Swanston Street in 1965 (Langley 1992:17-18).

In 1966, Lyndon B Johnson became the first President of the United States to visit Australia, invited by Prime Minister Harold Holt who pledged that Australia would go 'all the way with LBJ'. His visit to Melbourne, which involved a motorcade through the city centre, drew mass crowds. It also incited protests from students who opposed Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. A 1960s almanac recorded that:

*A[n] estimated 750,000 people turned out in Melbourne to welcome visiting US President Lyndon Johnson. Although most of the crowd are pro-LBJ, a strong anti-war contingent demonstrates against the visit, chanting 'LBJ, LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?'* (Reason 2016)



Figure 10 and 11. President Johnson among the crowds on Swanston Street, Melbourne, 1966 (*Age*, 22 October 1966)

While early protests were relatively small in size, in the late-1960s there was an increased sense that the war in Vietnam was one 'that couldn't be won'. The peace movement grew in popularity and momentum as a result (Hamel-Green).

The Vietnam moratorium protests, the first of which took place on 8 May 1970, were the largest public demonstrations in Australia's history until that time and represented a growing discontent towards the government's commitment to the Vietnam War in general and conscription in particular. The primary objectives were to force the withdrawal of Australian troops from Vietnam and end conscription. The protests took place during a period of great social change in Australia, when people from a range of backgrounds were prepared to defy authority.

A total of 200,000 people across Australia took part in the First Moratorium. It was the Melbourne city centre that hosted the largest event – 70,000 people marched peacefully down Bourke Street led by organiser Jim Cairns. This equated to more than one in 30 Melburnians. The Australian Council of Trade Union (ACTU) president at the time, Bob Hawke, described the moratorium rally and march as 'the most significant public participation in a political

event' (*Age* 9 May 1970:1); another reporter stated that: 'It was, without doubt, the most impressive demonstration seen in Melbourne. The sheer weight of numbers alone was staggering...It was a legitimate expression of opinion by a substantial section of the population' (*Age* May 1970:15).

As reported in the *Age* the day following the First Moratorium, 'the successful demonstration virtually guarantees that more mass demonstrations will be attempted, perhaps in support of causes other than Vietnam. The Vietnam Moratorium Committee has given enlarged meaning to the notion of peaceful public dissent...' (*Age* 9 May 1970:15).

The intense social activism of the late-1960s was also embodied in the Women's Liberation Movement, a feminist movement that fought for equal civil rights and personal and social liberation. In 1969, women's liberationists met outside the Commonwealth Offices in Melbourne to protest against the repeated failure of the Arbitration Commission to award equal pay for equal work. Though the Commission ultimately awarded equal pay to women, this only applied to strictly equal work. In 1972, the Melbourne Women's Liberation set up a centre at 16 Little La Trobe Street to act as a gathering place for members of the movement (Fairbanks).



Figure 12. Marchers moving down Collins Street during the Vietnam Moratorium, 1970 (Australian War Memorial, P00671.009)



Figure 13. First Vietnam Moratorium in Melbourne, 1970 (State Library of Victoria)

#### 7.4 City Square debates

Another controversial issue in central Melbourne in the postwar period was the provision of a city square. Robert Hoddle's design for the city of Melbourne lacked any form of civic or open space within the grid, but reserved blocks or allotments for markets, public buildings, and churches. The lack of any public space or sweeping boulevards was criticised as early as 1850, and proposals for public squares within the Hoddle Grid cropped up regularly from the 1850s.

A city square for Melbourne was a common topic of discussion throughout the 1950s and 1960s, with frequent debate about the most appropriate location for such a space. In 1966, when the Queen Victoria Building on the corner of Swanston and Collins streets, and the adjacent City Club Hotel opposite the Town Hall were demolished pending future development, Council decided that was a good site for the long-debated city square, and purchased the land.

Lord Mayor Bernard Evans welcomed the decision, stating the 'decision by the City Council to proceed with the first stage of the project is a welcome initiative in the long, frustrating fight for a more beautiful Melbourne' (*Age* 5 July 1966:2). Those opposed to the plan criticised the chosen location, bemoaning the fact that 'the site suggested, near the Town Hall, would create a dead frontage which would restrict Melbourne's business development' (*Age* 7 September 1960:6).

Despite this opposition, Council proceeded to acquire properties along Swanston Street between the Town Hall and St Paul's Cathedral, and east up to and including the Regent Theatre. Buildings purchased included the Cathedral Hotel, Cathedral House, Guy's Buildings (demolished 1969), Green's Building and the Town Hall Chambers (demolished 1971) as well as Wentworth House and Regency House on Flinders Lane. The Regent Theatre was also slated to be demolished, but was saved by a union ban (Annear 2005:215-225).

A brief for the City Square was developed and it was here that the political and social climate of the 1960s first intersected with architectural outcomes, coinciding as it did with Australia's involvement in the war in Vietnam and the resultant protest marches that took place along Swanston and Collins streets. Councillors, concerned that the creation of a large public square would encourage protests and demonstrations by creating a platform to stage such mass events, decided that the square would be designed in such a way that there would be no potential for the public to gather in large numbers (Reed 2011). A national design competition was held and architects Denton, Corker & Marshall were awarded the commission. A makeshift plaza, paved and planted to offset the demolition hoardings, was developed on the site of the future City Square in 1970 (Annear 2005:223, Figure 15). This site did little to assuage the Government's fears about inciting 'the spirit of democracy' – the plaza providing the ideal location to stage a large-scale Labor rally in protest of Gough Whitlam's dismissal in November 1975 (Figure 16).

After decades of debate, Melbourne's City Square was finally opened in 1980. (May 2008d)



Figure 15. The temporary plaza on the site of the future City Square, 1970 (State Library of Victoria H2003.100/910)





Figure 16. Labor protest rally in City Square, November 1975 (State Library of Victoria H2012.140/488)

7.0 Shaping cultural life	
Sub-themes	Examples
Arts and creative life in the city	NGV International, St Kilda Road (1968)
	La Trobe Library Extension (State Library of Victoria) La Trobe Street (1961-65)
Belonging to an ethnic or cultural group	Pellegrini's Espresso Bar 66 Bourke Street (1954)
	Stalactites Restaurant 177-183 Lonsdale Street (1978)
	Italian Waiters Club, 20 Meyers Place
	China Town Little Bourke Street (remodelled in 1960s)
City Square debates	City Square, 44-86 Swanston Street (1980)

## 8.0 Enjoying the city

### 8.1 Expressing civic pride

In 1948, Melbourne lord mayor Sir Raymond Connelly described Melbourne as a city 'in the doldrums, a metropolis whose civic pride was wilting' (Serle cited in Lewis et al 1993:203). The key events of Queen Elizabeth's visit in 1954 and the 1956 Olympic Games did much to boost civic pride, attract investment and promote Melbourne to the world.

Queen Elizabeth II became the first reigning monarch to visit Australia in 1954. In anticipation of her visit, the city of Melbourne underwent a 'royal face lift', with decorations including a large illuminated crown on the domed roof over the main entrance to Flinders St Station and a bushland scene covering the upper part of the Coles' store in Bourke St (*Weekly Times*, 24 February 1954:58). Her visit coincided with the city's preparations for the 1956 Olympic Games.

### 8.2 Melbourne's introduction to the world stage

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Figure 17. Hosie's Hotel Melbourne, cnr. Elizabeth & Flinders Streets, 1955 (National Library of Australia)

### 8.3 Entertainment and socialising

The retail and entertainment precincts in Melbourne, which emerged in the early 1960s, were largely protected from consolidation and redevelopment due to lower plot ratio controls and difficulty in consolidating a sufficient number of properties to achieve a legitimate tower form. The level of redevelopment in these precincts is more modest, with fine grained, smaller sized allotments along with valued heritage fabric. During this phase, conservation of heritage buildings was not yet an intentional pursuit, but rather a residual effect of the prevailing logic of the planning system (CoM 2016:5-7).

Higher disposable income, more leisure time, and larger metropolitan populations created an increase in entertainment and tourism industries in every Australian capital city. According to Marsden, only the office and finance sector has had more impact on the physical expansion and alteration of existing places, especially in central Sydney and Melbourne. Even though increased suburbanisation from the 1950s led to the closure of entertainment venues and theatres in Melbourne's city centre, other venues opened. In 1970, for example, Hoyts Cinema Centre in Bourke Street opened the first multi-cinema complex in Australia.

Clubs have also historically been an important part of city life. The Lyceum Club for women built new premises at 2-18 Ridgway Place in 1959 while new clubrooms for the RACV Club were built at 123 Queen Street in 1961. Such places provided patrons with a space in the city to meet, network and promote cultural activities.

8.0 Enjoying the city	
Sub-themes	Specific examples
Melbourne's introduction to the world stage	Hosies Hotel, 1-5 Elizabeth Street (1954-56)
Entertaining and socialising	Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-144 Bourke Street (1966-69) Mid City, 194-200 Bourke Street (1969-70)
	Lyceum Club, 2-18 Ridgway Place (1959) RACV Club, 111-129 Queen Street (1961)



## 10.0 Preserving and celebrating the city's history

### 10.1 Conserving the urban environment

After a lull in building activity in the city during the war years, Melbourne saw dramatic redevelopment from the late 1950s. Planning visions that described inner-city areas as ripe for development drew vocal protest from residents who saw the destruction of community, local business people who objected to the impact of freeways, and conservationists who opposed the loss of historic buildings (Marsden 2000:94).

The demolition of a number of historic buildings in the 1950s led to the formation of the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) in 1956 and by the late 1960s, conservation efforts were driven by broad new alliances between residents, National Trusts and unions. In Melbourne for example, the Builders Labourers Federation worked with the National Trust in the 1970s to impose 'green bans' on buildings the union refused to demolish, including the Regent Theatre on Collins Street. This activism led to reforms to the planning scheme.

The Register of Historic Buildings was established in 1974 through the *Historic Buildings Act 1974* and this provided statutory power over specified historic buildings. However, despite being heritage listed, a terrace dwelling at 80 Collins Street was demolished in the mid-1970s in order to give the proposed Nauru House office tower a Collins Street address. This event helped to trigger a new Central City Interim Development Order, approved in June 1976, which introduced additional planning controls over demolition (Ramsay Consulting 2012:10).

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## Appendix 1

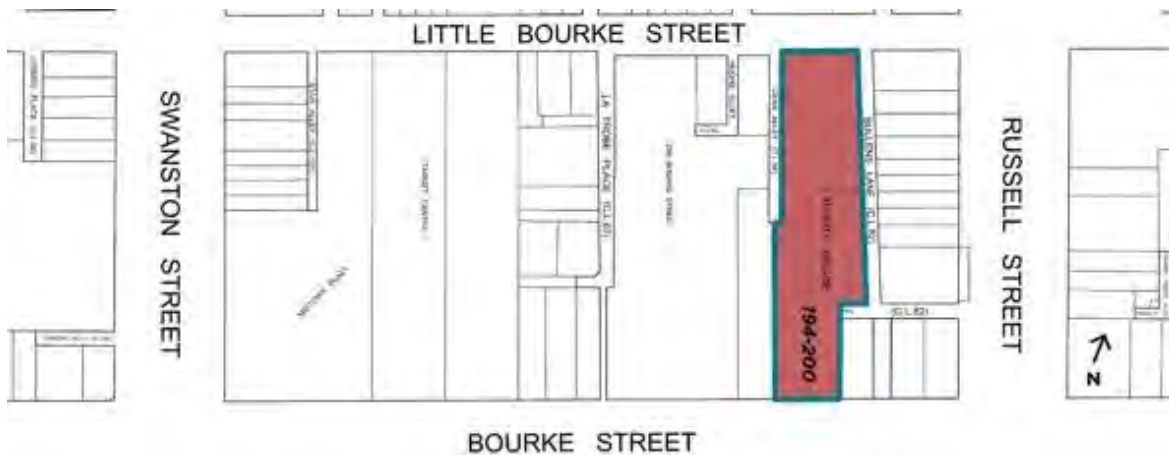
### A comparison of the *City of Melbourne Postwar Thematic Environmental History* themes with the *Victorian Framework of Historical Themes (2012)*

City of Melbourne TEH Themes (based on 2012 TEH)	Victorian Framework of Historical Themes
Shaping the urban landscape	6.2 Creating Melbourne 9.3 Achieving distinction in the arts 2.5 Migrating and making a home
Governing, administering and policing the city	6.2 Creating Melbourne 7.3 Maintaining law and order
Building a commercial city	5.2 Developing a manufacturing capacity 5.3 Markets and retailing 5.5 Banking and finance
Creating a functioning city	3.3 Linking Victorians by rail 3.4 Linking Victorians by road in the twentieth century 3.5 Travelling by tram 3.7 Establishing and maintaining communications 8.3 Providing health and welfare services
Living in the city	6.7 Making homes for Victorians
Working in the city	5.8 Working
Shaping cultural life	2.5 Migrating and making a home 2.6 Maintaining distinctive cultures 7.2 Struggling for political rights 9.2 Nurturing a vibrant arts scene
Enjoying the city	5.6 Entertaining and socialising 5.7 Catering for tourists 9.1 Participating in sports and recreation
Preserving and celebrating the city's history	7.5 Protecting Victoria's heritage

## **INDIVIDUAL POSTWAR PLACE CITATIONS**



<b>SITE NAME</b>	Hoys Mid City Cinemas
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	194-200 Bourke Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	101204



<b>SURVEY DATE:</b> 2011		<b>SURVEY BY:</b> Graham Butler	
<b>HERITAGE INVENTORY</b>	N/A	<b>EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY</b>	Yes – interim controls HO1002, HO507
<b>PLACE TYPE</b>	Individual Heritage Place	<b>PROPOSED CATEGORY</b>	Significant
		<b>FORMER GRADE</b>	B
<b>DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:</b>	Bogle & Banfield	<b>BUILDER:</b>	E A Watts Pty Ltd
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Postwar Period (1945-1965)	<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	1969-70

## 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 1.10 Brutalism and brickwork
8 Enjoying the city	8.3 Entertainment and socialising

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Coffee palace, temperance hall
1920s	Retail or warehouse, drapers
1960s	Retail, cinema, carpark

## 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

Hoyts Mid City Cinema, built in 1969-70 and designed by Bogle Banfield, is associated with the increase in leisure and tourism provided in the city centre in the 1960s., and one of several significant brutalist buildings in the City of Melbourne.

## 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.



### **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).

### **Entertainment and socialising**

The retail and entertainment precincts in Melbourne, which emerged in the early 1960s, were largely protected from consolidation and redevelopment due to lower plot ratio controls and difficulty in consolidating a sufficient number of properties to achieve a legitimate tower form. The level of redevelopment in these precincts is more modest, with fine grained, smaller sized allotments along with valued heritage fabric. During this phase, conservation of heritage buildings was not yet an intentional pursuit, but rather a residual effect of the prevailing logic of the planning system (CoM 2016:5-7).

Higher disposable income, more leisure time, and larger metropolitan populations created an increase in entertainment and tourism industries in every Australian capital city. According to Marsden, only the office and finance sector has had more impact on the physical expansion and alteration of existing places, especially in central Sydney and Melbourne. Even though increased suburbanisation from the 1950s led to the closure of entertainment venues and theatres in Melbourne's city centre, other venues opened. In 1970, for example, Hoyts Cinema Centre in Bourke Street opened the first multi-cinema complex in Australia.

Clubs have also historically been an important part of city life. The Lyceum Club for women built new premises at 2-18 Ridgway Place in 1959 while new clubrooms for the RACV Club were built at 123 Queen Street in 1961. Such places provided patrons with a space in the city to meet, network and promote cultural activities.

### **SITE HISTORY**

Hoyts Pictures formed in 1909, commenced screenings at St. George's Hall, Bourke Street, (later, Hoyts De Luxe), and gradually built up their empire of cinemas. Initially an Australian company, their

success at creating exhibiting venues attracted Hollywood's interest and 20th Century Fox's acquisition of a controlling share meant that a cartel was formed between film exhibitor and maker.

Meanwhile, the company built up a suburban chain of over 40 outlets during the period 1920-40, which remained active until the first drive-ins in 1953 and the advent of television, in 1956. A subsequent reduction of hardtop cinema audiences caused a rationalisation of large single-screen cinemas. The original Capitol (2200 seats) was rebuilt in the 1960s, the Regent (3200 seats) and Plaza and Paris (former Lyceum) closed in 1969-70.

Mid City was not a Hoyts' project. Architect and entrepreneur, Gordon Banfield, and the company, Ralton Holdings, developed two cinemas (932 and 250 seats), a shopping arcade and a car park (entered from Little Bourke St) to the 1969 design of Bogle & Banfield, as constructed by E A Watts Pty Ltd. The Hoyts company was approached as potential lessees and after fitting out the interior, opened with a crowd of 5000 in November 1970. The Hoyts Cinema Centre had already opened the year before, almost completing the company's rationalisation of their City Cinemas from old venues to new. Expectations that a third cinema would be incorporated in the Mid City complex were realised in December 1975, when part of the once vast upper level foyer space was taken up for an 'intimate' 220 seat venue. Bogle & Banfield and Dolphin were the architects and builders.

Another phase of the Theatre's development was superficial renovations, designed by Melbourne architect, Ronald Fitch, in 1979, while the retail arcade, which had never been prosperous, was refurbished in 1977-8.



Figure 1. Mid City Cinemas, constructed 1969-70, photo date unknown. (Source: National Trust)

#### *Bogle & Banfield Associates, architects*

Bogle & Banfield Associates was a partnership formed between Gordon Douglas Banfield (1922-2007) and Alan Bogle (1902-1976). Bogle was articled to Louis Williams of North and Williams and later worked with Irwin and Stephenson. In 1945, he joined the influential practice of Harry Norris. Banfield worked in Queensland before also joining Norris' office in 1954, entering partnership with Banfield in 1959. The practice flourished until Bogle's retirement in 1968 after which Banfield became

a large player in property in the city of Melbourne. The work of the practice was characterised by bold and confident buildings including the use of Brutalism (Goad and Willis eds. 2012:95).

In the tradition of new cinemas, Mid City struck a more adventurous note than contemporary city commercial buildings, freed from the needs of fenestration or natural light. Bogle and Banfield's core of designers and project architects (later as the firms PINK and Joyce & Nankevill) had already shown an innovative approach to design in the Japanese Brutalist Total Car park building, Russell Street, and the striking St. Vincent's Private Hospital, Victoria Parade. Bogle & Banfield had won prizes for their Sandown Racecourse Grandstand (1962) and they also designed the former City of Doncaster Municipal Offices in 1970.

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

Mid City Cinemas extends from Bourke Street through to Little Bourke Street. Opening to Bourke Street is the cinema and retail frontage, whilst Little Bourke Street was designed as a carpark entrance, now partially infilled by a retail frontage. The building is designed in the brutalist style that emerged in the 1950s. Brutalism might loosely be characterised as a desire to achieve aesthetic effect through the deliberately frank expression of building construction, materials and technology,

Mid City Cinemas has a sculptural form and uses an exposed off-form concrete finish. An early use of the now ubiquitous trowelled-on aggregate finish, the architects used a red oxide applied front and back in a rich burst of colour in contrast to the natural concrete of the side walls. Where needed, windows are recessed behind concrete louvres at the top and bottom of each elevation, forming a deliberate contrasting element.

The Bourke Street awning is supported on two deep paired cantilevered beams. Of a similar scale to adjoining buildings and neutral in a fenestration sense, the rich colouring and bold forms of Mid City are a marked contrast within the commercial streetscape.

## **INTEGRITY**

Unusually smart for a car park entrance, the Little Bourke Street elevation originally had large areas of curved butt-glazing and, as a focal point, a space-age yellow bubble Cashier's Office guarded car park entry and exit (now gone) which was also used at the Total Carpark. Fashionable fittings and materials like Pirelli rubber were used here and in the arcade beyond (now demolished).

At the Bourke Street end of the lobby, for a brief period, there was an unusual group of interlocked mushroom coloured cylinders which served as offices, (now demolished), while the Theatres themselves were austere, if comfortably, finished.

The glazed balustrade is an addition to the cantilevered verandah, as is the glazing that has replaced concrete louvres. Inside there were the spacious lobby areas where the 'floating' roof plane hovered with lights dotted like stars, however these lobbies are since altered. Signs have been added and details altered on the exterior and interior.

## **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

There are currently two State-listed brutalist buildings in the City of Melbourne, one of which is also a cinema complex.

*Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-144 Bourke Street, 1966-69 (VHR H2335; HO1094)*

Designed by architect Peter Muller, the Former Hoyts Cinema Centre introduced the first multi-cinema complex to Victoria and consequently has an important association with the development of the cinema industry in the State. The Former Hoyts Cinema Centre is of architectural significance as a highly innovative and individualistic building with a distinctive tower which dominates the overall design. It is unique in Victoria (Victorian Heritage Database Place ID 196067).



Figure 2. Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-144 Bourke Street constructed 1966-69. (Source: VHD)

*Total House, 170-190 Russell Street, 1964-65 (VHR H2329; HO1095, HO507 Little Bourke Street Precinct)*

Total House is a landmark of post-World War Two modernist design and is one of the earliest and best expressions of Brutalist architecture in Victoria built in 1964-65 to a design by architects Bogle & Banfield Associates. Brutalism incorporated ideas of the integrity of expression of materials, structure and function. Total House reflects these ideals in differentiating the functional parts of the building and the 'honest' display of its materials and structure. Total House is also an outstanding example of Japanese influence on architecture in Victoria in the postwar period (Victorian Heritage Database Place ID 194652).



Figure 3. Total House 170-190 Russell Street constructed 1964-65. (Source: VHD)

Hoyts Mid City Cinemas is a later building than the two examples provided, however it is a representative example of brutalism and its external integrity is still regarded as fair. Mid City Cinema has been identified as significant in three heritage reviews of the Capital City Zone over a 20-year period.

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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>  |
-

**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	Yes
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**

Paint controls should be applied to the areas now painted in red-oxide.



## REFERENCES

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

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), 2014, Melbourne's Marvellous Modernism, a Comparative Analysis of Modern Architecture in Melbourne's CBD 1955-1975.

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

### *General sources*

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

Melbourne City Council on-line i-Heritage database;

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

Daily newspaper reports such as 'The Argus';

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

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

### *Building Permit Applications*

18/7/1969 40693 New Building \$1,309,000

14/4/1975 45610 est. \$120,000 'A Cinema' (194-200)

26/2/1976 46540 \$6000 alterations to ground floor (200)

Peter Wallace, 1986, Hoyts Corporation Pty. Ltd. Letter to Graeme Butler: Opening 26/11/1970 (see 'The Age' 27/11/1970: 2) 5000 attend opening

National Trust of Australia (Vic)

File Number B6566 File only

'Venue' web site, <http://caarp.flinders.edu.au/venue/424/view>

### *References*

Goad, P. and Wills, J., 2012, *The Encyclopaedia of Australian Architecture*, Cambridge University Press

Cinema & Theatre Historical Society 1997, Cinema index: Melbourne cinemas, suburban cinemas, Victorian drive-ins. CATHS, Victoria.

Kilderry, D: <http://www.driveinsdownunder.com.au/projectionbooths/midcitybox.htm>

Walters, T 2009, *The Picture Palaces of Melbourne*, p. 235 '

*Sands & McDougall Melbourne*

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

1974

194-204 Mid-City Pharmacy

194-204 Mid-City Cinemas 4 & 5

194-204 Mid-City Shopping Centre: lists numerous retailers in centre.

(D1961 200-204 Sharpe Brothers Pty. Ltd. drapers)

**PREVIOUS STUDIES**

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**Central Activities District  
Conservation Study 1985** B

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**Central City Heritage  
Study Review 1993** C

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

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011** B

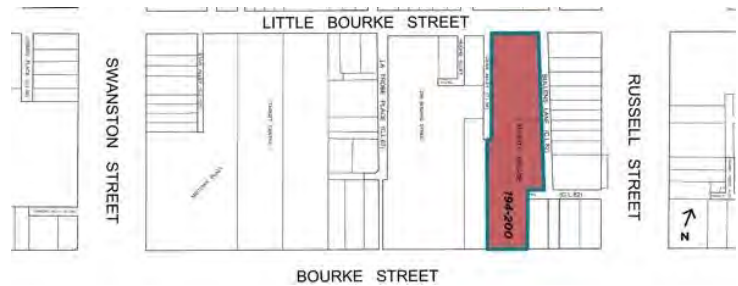
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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Hoyts Mid City  
Cinemas



**PS ref no:** [HOXXXXHO1002](#)



### What is significant?

Hoyts Mid City Cinemas at 194-200 Bourke Street, Melbourne, built 1969-70 and designed by Bogle & Banfield architects.

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 made to the street and first floor levels are not significant.

### How it is significant?

Hoyts Mid City Cinemas at 194-200 Bourke Street is of historical, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

Hoyts Mid City Cinema is historically significant as part of the increase in leisure and tourism provided in Melbourne, as the city became a place of entertainment made possible by higher disposable incomes and more leisure time from the 1960s. The establishment of Mid City and the Cinema Centre marked a turning point to more modern and intimate cinemas, following the closure of the large picture theatres of the interwar period. The Bourke Street location of the cinema followed over 120 years of the traditional siting of theatres in Melbourne. (Criterion A)

Hoyts Mid-City Cinemas is a representative example of a small class of brutalist buildings in the City of Melbourne. Popularised by architects in the mid-1960s, brutalism as a movement persisted until the late 1980s. Architects Bogle & Banfield Associates provided two of the best examples of brutalism in

Melbourne with Total House and the Mid City Cinemas. With Peter Muller's Hoyts Cinema Centre as an early and particularly large-scale example, these three buildings provide an excellent record of this movement. Both the Mid City and the Hoyts Cinema Centre are stylistically distinctive designs among the small number of new cinemas built in the postwar period. (Criterion D)

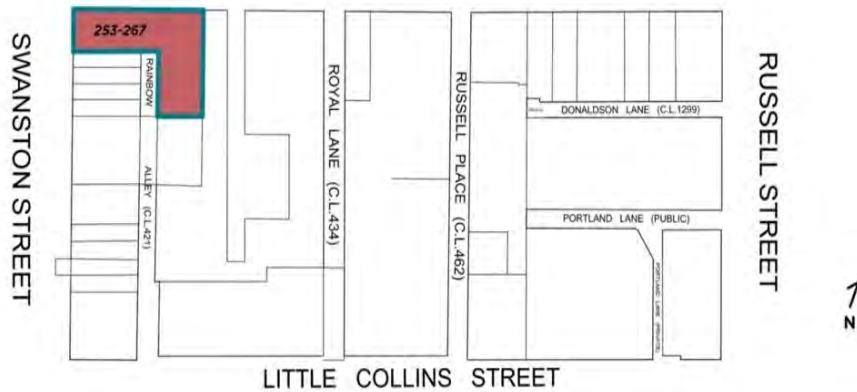
Hoyts Mid-City Cinemas is significant for its sculptural form that is highlighted by the red-oxide colour that contrasts with the off-form concrete of the side walls. As a building requiring little natural light, the brutalist architecture of the cinema complex relies primarily on an articulation of solid form. The slim concrete vertical louvres in front of the glazing are a contrast to the solid mass of the main part of the building. (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>	Royal Mail House
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	253-267 Bourke Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	101138



<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>	D Graeme Lumsden	<b>FORMER GRADE</b>	C
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	<b>BUILDER:</b>	Lewis Construction Co Pty Ltd
		<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	1961-1963



## THEMES

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

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Retail/Workshop, Office, Education, Hotel
1920s	Café/Restaurant, Merchant, Retail, Hotel
1960s	Café/Restaurant, Merchant, Office, Post Office, Telephone Kiosk

## 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

Royal Mail House was designed by architect D Graeme Lumsden and constructed in 1961-1963 for owners, The Hammerson Group (also referred to as the Hammerson Property and Investment Co Ltd, London), who invested in retail developments.

## 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

Royal Mail House was designed by architect D Graeme Lumsden and constructed in 1961-1963 for owners, The Hammerson Group (also referred to as the Hammerson Property and Investment Co Ltd, London), who invested in retail developments (RAIA; BAP; *Cross-Section*, Nov 1962:3). The builders were Lewis Construction Co Pty Ltd (*Cross-Section*, Nov 1962:3). The site was formerly occupied by the nineteenth century Royal Mail Hotel (S&Mc).

The City of Melbourne received a building permit application for the present building in May 1961 (estimated to cost £203,000), with construction commencing that same month (BAI; *Canberra Times*, 23 May 1961:2). Various design revisions were lodged with Council up to November 1962 incorporating 'alterations and additional storeys' (increasing the project cost to £392,000) (BAI). Construction was paused for six months, resuming in November 1962, following the addition of three more floors to the design (*Cross-Section*, Nov 1962:3).

Architectural drawings dated September 1962 and February 1963 showed plans of the ground floor and elevational drawings (Figure 1 - Figure 3). The steel-framed building was designed with notable features such as a mosaic-tiled façade, 'chequer-board' patterned windows, stepped window surrounds and a curvilinear canopy to the ground-level shopfronts (*Cross-Section*, Nov 1962:3; NTAV 2014:38, 47). Goad (2012: 417) notes that the 'sinusoidal canopy' that wraps around the façade 'could have earned the label "featurist"' in Robin Boyd's 1960 publication, *The Australian Ugliness*. The ground-level comprised retail outlets, including a shop occupied by Telepost, advertised as 'Australia's first 24-hour self-service post office', which also served as a public telephone kiosk with 45 pay telephones (Figure 7 – Figure 9) (*Canberra Times*, 1 May 1964:25). The kiosk also served as the main entrance to the building (Figure 1).

Following completion, Royal Mail House was occupied by the Post Master General's Department and Department of Interiors, as recorded in the 1965 Sands & McDougall Directory (S&Mc). A series of photos dating to the mid-late 1960s (Figure 4 – Figure 9) show the completed building (bearing the name 'Royal Mail House' on the Swanston Street elevation; since removed), shopfronts and ground-level canopy.

Advertisements published in *The Age* in 1984 (11 Aug 1984:79) noted that the office space had been completely refurbished, to let to tenants. In recent years, the Bourke Street façade has been integrated into art installations, such as Alexander Knox's permanent seasonal winter installation 'Maxims of Behaviour', in 2008. In 2019, the western elevation has a large-scale advertising panel and the rooftop holds a billboard that appears to have been in situ in the 1980s. Part of the window surrounds have been removed from the Bourke Street elevation (date unknown).

#### **D Graeme Lumsden, architect**

Donald Graeme Lumsden was born in Malvern, Victoria in 1915. He enrolled in the architecture course at Melbourne Technical College (now RMIT) before transferring to the University of Melbourne. From 1938 to 1940 he studied at the university's Architectural Atelier, while simultaneously completing his articles in the office of A & K Henderson. By 1948, Lumsden had established his own private architectural practice, operating from premises in South Yarra (*Age*, 30 Nov 1948), where he specialised in the design of industrial complexes. A substantial number of his commissions were located in Tasmania where staff member, Ted Ashton, resided to oversee this branch of the practice.

Despite the focus on large industrial projects, Lumsden's practice also designed office buildings in central Melbourne in the 1960s, including Investment House at 116 Queens Street (1960) and Royal Mail House, at the corner of Bourke and Swanston streets (1961-63).

From 1970 to 1979, the firm was known as Lumsden, Ashton & Hale, before becoming Lumsden & Ashton following Bill Hale's departure. Lumsden closed the practice following Ashton's own departure sometime later.

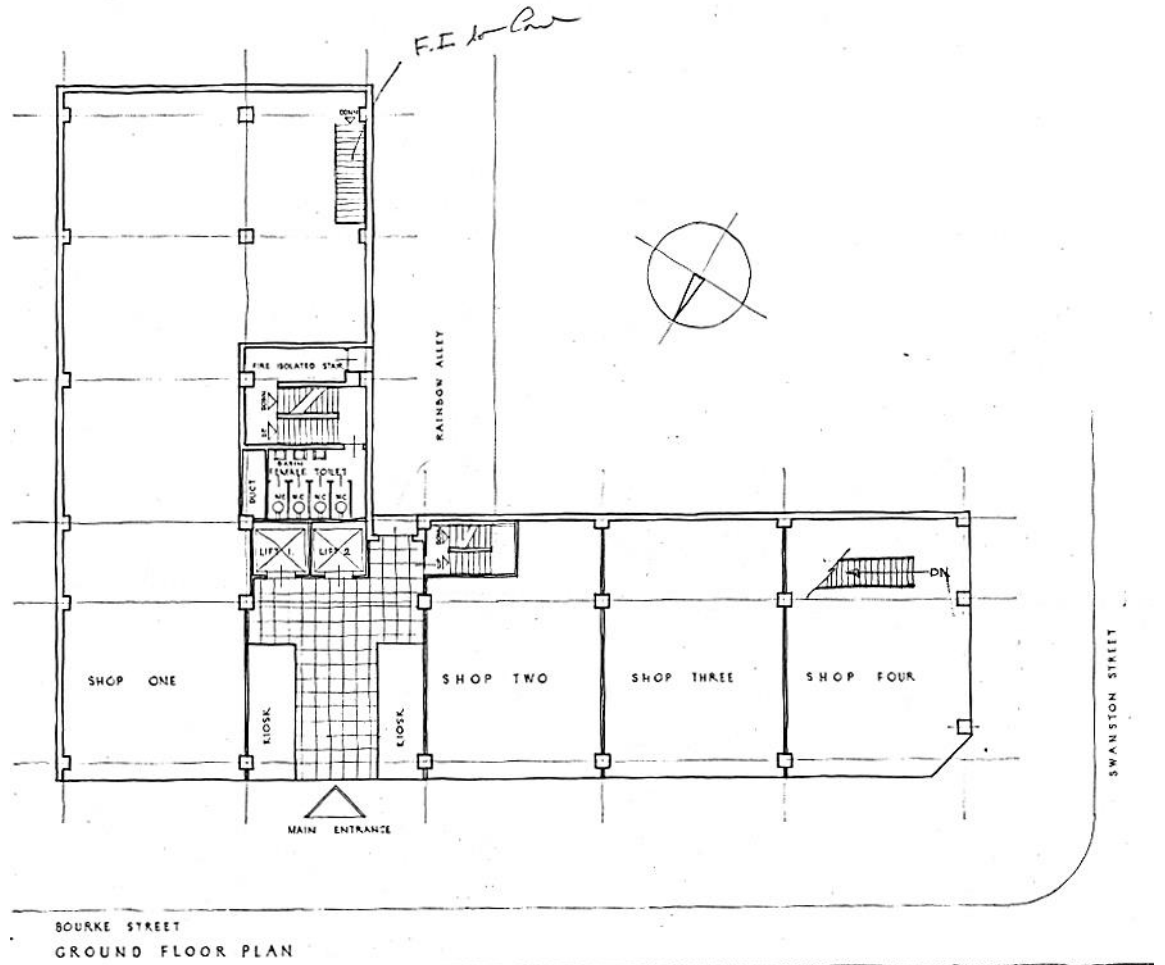


Figure 1. Ground floor plan by D Graeme Lumsden, dated September 1962 (BAP).

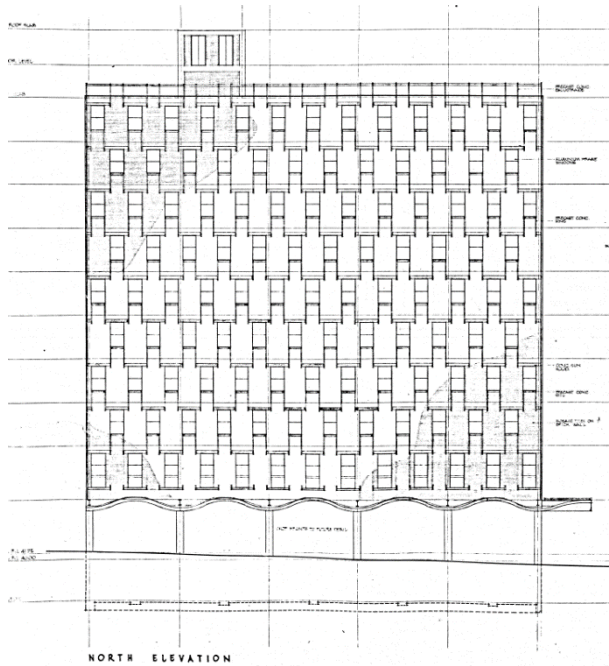


Figure 2. North elevation to Bourke Street. Drawing date stamped February 1963 (BAP).

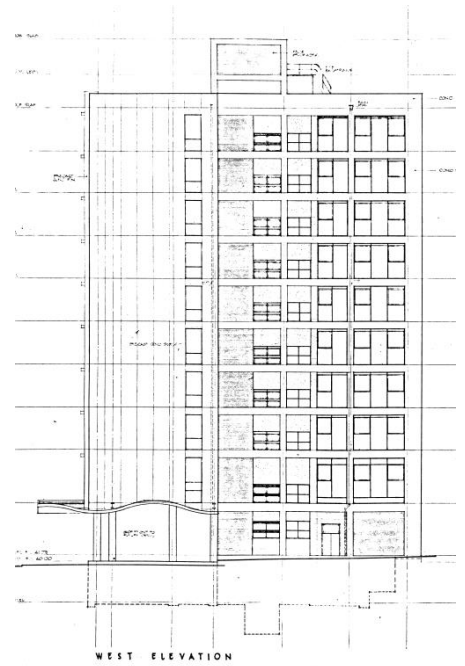


Figure 3. West elevation. Drawing date stamped February 1963 (BAP).





Figure 4. Royal Mail House in the final stages of completion in 1963 (NAA, Wells, photographer, A1200, L45445).



Figure 5. Detail of a 1966 photo showing the western end of the completed building (SLV, K. J. Halla, photographer, Image H36133/209).



Figure 6. The completed building in 1967 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/416).



Figure 7. A 1967 photo showing the shopfronts and soffit of the canopy (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H98.30/237).



Figure 8. The completed Telepost shop in the 1960s (NAA: B5919, 268).



Figure 9. Interior of the Telepost shop (NAA: B5919, 268).



Figure 10. Royal Mail House in the early 1980s (City of Melbourne Libraries online Heritage Collection, Reference no. Butler16291; photo dated 1982-1985).

## SITE DESCRIPTION

Royal Mail House at 253-267 Bourke Street is a 9-storey commercial building located at the south-east corner of Bourke and Swanston streets. Constructed in 1961-63 to a design by D Graeme Lumsden, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

The building is L-shaped in form with a main broad frontage to the north, facing Bourke Street, a narrow façade fronting Swanston Street, and a north-south wing along the eastern boundary of the allotment. The latter is situated behind a row of four three-storey Victorian buildings which front Swanston Street. Rainbow Alley runs between the two to provide lane access to the buildings from Little Collins Street.

The building is of concrete encased steel column and beam construction with concrete parapet, east and south walls of concrete and face brickwork, and west wall of precast concrete panels. The latter presented a blank wall to Swanston Street with a single vertical strip of windows at the southern extremity (this entire façade appears to have been reclad recently and the strip of windows covered or

removed). The broad feature façade, facing Bourke Street, is a highly articulated curtain wall with rows of individual rectangular, aluminium framed windows set into a mosaic tile-clad wall of precast concrete panels. Deep projecting cast in-situ concrete sunhoods and precast concrete sills, supported on brick spandrels, provide definition to the otherwise frameless window openings. The resulting façade retains a highly patterned chequerboard appearance, despite the removal of concrete fins which connected the sunhoods and window sills above.

Royal Mail House is accessed at street level by a broad entrance in Bourke Street (originally an open arcade), which is flanked by retail outlets. Protection at street level is provided by a highly innovative undulating, cantilevered awning which lines both the Bourke Street and Swanston Street facades.

### **INTEGRITY**

Royal Mail House at 253-267 Bourke Street, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building above street level, remains highly intact to its original construction in 1961-63. Changes include the enclosing of the original arcade entrance and alterations to shop facades at street level, removal of the precast concrete fins from the Bourke Street façade and the recladding of the entire façade of the narrow west façade facing Swanston Street.

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, 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**

Royal Mail House 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 prominent corner site, the building's broad feature façade and highly distinctive undulating cantilevered verandah at street level, can be clearly observed from both Bourke and Swanston streets. Despite removal of the vertical window fins, changes at street level and the recladding of the narrow west façade, Royal Mail House 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 Royal Mail House. These are detailed below.

#### **State-significant places**

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

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



### Locally-significant places

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

#### *Precinct Heritage Overlay*



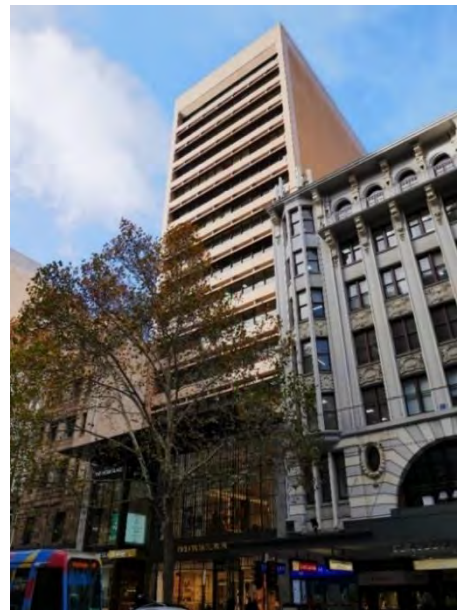
Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



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



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



Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, 251-257 Collins Street, (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 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)





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



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)



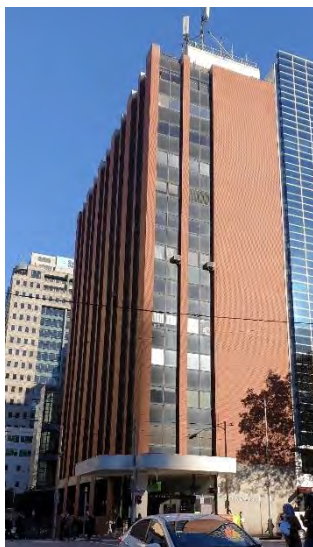
Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William Street  
(Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



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, Royal Mail House at 253-267 Bourke 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 – Royal Mail House 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).

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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 43.01-4)	No
INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

**OTHER**

N/A

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*The Age*.

*The Canberra Times* [A.C.T.]

**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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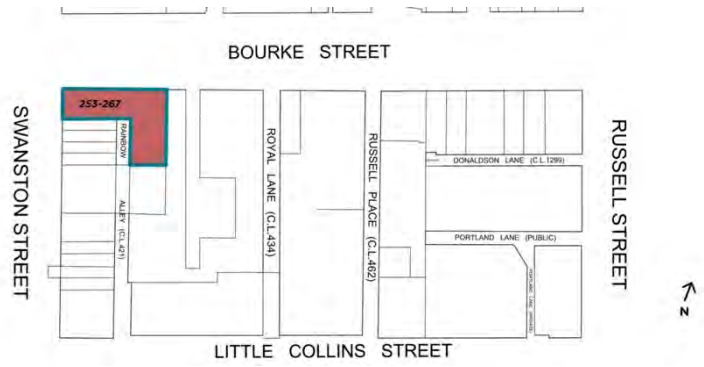
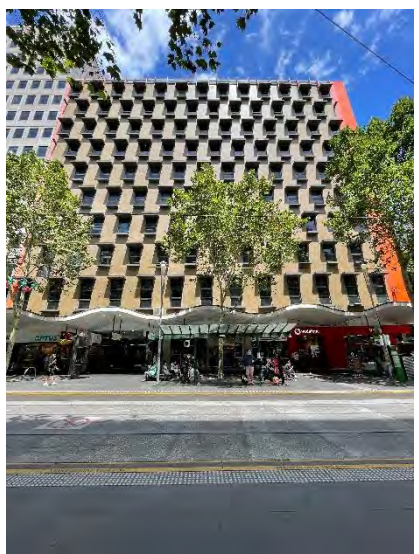
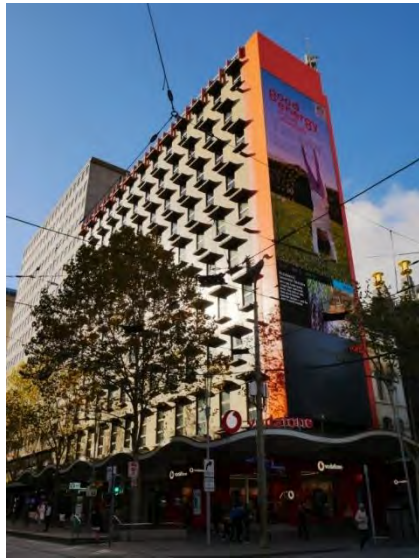
**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011** Ungraded

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### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Royal Mail House

PS ref no: HOXXXX1305



### What is significant?

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Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street, a multi-storey office building constructed in 1961-63.

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 and the west façade facing Swanston Street are not significant.

### How it is significant?

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Royal Mail House at 253-267 Bourke Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

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Constructed in 1961-63 to a design by D Graeme Lumsden, Royal Mail House has a clear association with the postwar building boom which transformed central Melbourne into a modern high-rise city. The design of these commercial buildings from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s – many of which were architect designed – was driven by the commercial demands and the prestige afforded by a dominant city presence (Criterion A).

Royal Mail House is a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building. The building strongly reflects the style which was popular in the 1960s to the mid 1970s, particularly in central Melbourne. Constructed as a 9-storey building on a prominent CBD corner site, Royal Mail House clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a 1960s to mid 1970s structure, particularly the broad feature façade comprising a highly articulated curtain wall of solid appearance and distinct bands of windows with dominant hoods and sills that are set in a regular pattern across the entire wall, as well the highly distinctive undulating cantilevered verandah at street level and the use of materials such as mosaic tiles and precast concrete panels. These demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style (Criterion D).

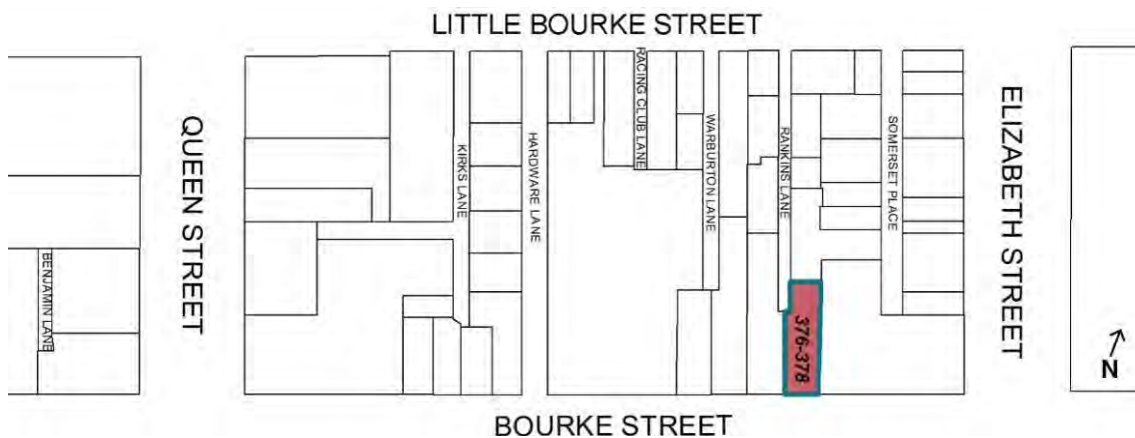
### Primary source

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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 Coles and Garrard Building
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	376-378 Bourke Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	101191



<b>SURVEY DATE:</b>	October 2018	<b>SURVEY BY:</b>	Context
<b>HERITAGE INVENTORY</b>	H7822-1435	<b>EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY</b>	No
<b>PLACE TYPE</b>	Individual Heritage Place	<b>PROPOSED CATEGORY</b>	Significant
<b>DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:</b>	Meldrum & Noad	<b>FORMER GRADE</b>	C
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	<b>BUILDER:</b>	Thompson & Chalmers
		<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	1957

## 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
4 Creating a functioning city	4.3 Providing health and welfare services

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Hotels and lodgings
1920s	Offices
1960s	Offices

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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

**Extent of overlay:** Refer to map

## SUMMARY

The former Coles & Garrard building at 376-378 Bourke Street, Melbourne, is a five-storey commercial curtain wall building built in the Post-War Modernist style. It was designed by architects Meldrum & Noad and opened in 1957. It was built for opticians Coles & Garrard Pty Ltd, Melbourne's largest optometry firm until it was sold to OPSM in 1988. Coles & Garrard had an association with the building from 1957 to c1986.

## 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.

### Providing health and welfare services

Health, welfare and education services were historically established in Melbourne's city centre. The Stella Maris Seafarer's Centre at 588-600 Little Collins Street (1972-73) was one of many charities established as part of the Catholic Church's official missionary work to provide pastoral care, services and support for seafarers.

The Pharmaceutical Guild, established in Victoria in 1928 to ensure the quality of medicines and to establish a uniform scale of wages for pharmaceutical assistants, constructed a building at 18-22 Francis Street in 1954 to a design by Cowper, Murphy and Appleford. Optometrists, Coles and Garrard, established an office building and consulting rooms at 376 Bourke Street in 1957 to a design by architects Meldrum and Noad.

The Queen Victoria Hospital, established in La Trobe Street in 1896 as the first women's hospital in Victoria, moved to 210 Lonsdale Street in 1946. Its primary aim was to be a hospital 'For Women, By Women'. By 1965 it became the new Monash University's teaching hospital for gynaecology, obstetrics and paediatrics and changed from treating solely female patients to being a 'family hospital'. Renamed the Queen Victoria Medical Centre in 1977, it relocated to the Monash Medical Centre at Clayton in 1989 (Russell 2008).

### SITE HISTORY

The land comprising the subject property at 376-378 Bourke Street was first purchased by Joseph Solomon in November 1837, as part of Allotment 7, Block 20, in the City of Melbourne (Badman & S&Mc 1892). This site was originally addressed as 17 Bourke Street (S&Mc1885). The earliest occupation of the land was c1839, with a building at neighbouring Crown Allotment 8, Block 20 extending into the site. By 1850, it is suggested that a hotel might have occupied the site, and by 1859, William Smith had opened the New York Dining Rooms on the site (Fels, Lavelle & Mider 1993, Inventory no 435; *Argus* 16 December 1859:1). This establishment continued to trade on the site for almost a century, under the name of either the New York Dining Rooms, or the New York Hotel, until the present building was erected (S&Mc 1955).

In 1946, a fire broke out in the hotel building, starting in the bottom of the lift well and working its way up to the top of the building, causing widespread damage and collapsing the roof (*Advocate* 9 October 1946:5). In 1956, the de-licensed four-storey premises of the New York Hotel was put up for auction (*Argus* 30 May 1956:15).

In 1957, an article in building and architecture journal *Cross-Section* noted the planned construction of a steel-framed four-storey (with provision for seven storeys) office block designed by Melbourne architects, Meldrum & Noad, for opticians Coles & Garrard on a 32-foot frontage at 376 Bourke Street (*Cross-Section* 1 May 1957:3, as cited in AAI, record no 87921).

Founded by H E Coles, opticians Coles & Garrard Pty Ltd opened in Melbourne in March 1922. Proprietor Earle Coles was described as 'feisty and energetic', and built his business on advertising and commercial contracts with government agencies. Coles regarded the firm as a commercial entity, a view that ran contrary to other leaders of the profession at the time who practised with professional restraint rather than as makers and sellers of spectacles. The Coles & Garrard Pty Ltd premises were originally located at an adjoining building (known as Cromwell Building) at 370-374 Bourke Street, which has since been demolished.

The firm expanded during the postwar period, establishing a branch in Geelong in 1940. Coles retired in 1948, and sold the business to 18 members of staff. The firm continued to grow during the 1950s, opening a branch in Bendigo by 1955 and another branch in Chadstone shopping centre by 1958. Further development ensued, with many branches being established in shopping centres in the following years.

By May 1957, the New York Hotel had been demolished, and foundations for the present building laid, alongside underpinning of adjacent buildings (BP 31202). The rendered brick office building with a curtain wall of blue spandrel panels and opening window sections was built to five-storeys and completed by 1958 (see Figure 1) (National Trust 2014:32).

By the time of construction of the subject building at 376-378 Bourke Street in 1957, the firm employed 120 people (ACO 2017). Coles and Garrard Pty Ltd was the largest optometry firm in Melbourne until it was sold to OPSM in 1988 and ceased trading under its name a few years later (ACO 2017).

The 1986 building permit card for the site notes that the structure was still referred to as the 'Coles Garrard Building' in 1986, indicating that the firm was still operating from the premises in this year. The building permit card notes a substantial 'refurbishment' in September 1986 without further details, and that it had a change of use at this time (MBAI). It is likely that the ground level was converted to retail this time, as the subject building comprised office and retail premises in 1987 (Age 8 December 1987:42).

Currently, the building houses a pharmacy and two businesses (CoMMaps).



Figure 1. Showing the Coles and Garrard building (second from RHS) at 376-378 Bourke Street in 1959. (Source: Fowler 1939, SLV [copyright](#))





Figure 2. Showing the Coles and Garrard building (second from right-hand side) in the 1960s. (Source: Halla 1960-170, Picture Victoria [copyright](#))

#### *Meldrum & Noad, Architects*

The architectural practice Meldrum & Noad was formed in 1938 by Percy Hayman Meldrum (1887-1968) and Arthur Aldred Noad. Meldrum had formerly been in partnership with A G Stephenson, practicing as Stephenson & Meldrum from 1921 before departing the firm in late 1937 due to a disagreement over the firm's direction. Arthur Noad had been the manager of the Melbourne office of Stephenson & Meldrum (Willis 2012: 450)

Percy Hayman Meldrum studied at Ballarat College and was articled to AA Fritsch from 1907 to 1913. Moving to London in 1914, Meldrum practiced as an aircraft designer at the War Office and established an atelier in Wells Street, London, which became a gathering place for Australian architects engaged in war service. At the end of World War One Meldrum joined the staff of the Architectural Association, where he taught A G Stephenson and Donald Turner. In 1921, he returned to Australia to join A G Stephenson as Stephenson & Meldrum. Practising as principal designer of Stephenson & Meldrum, he strongly encouraged the inclusion of murals and sculpture in the firm's projects. His work during the practice as Stephenson & Meldrum included Newspaper House, Collins Street (1932) and Castlemaine Art Gallery and Historic Museum (1930).

Meldrum practiced as Meldrum & Noad between 1937 and the 1950s, during which time he won the 1942 RVIA Street Architecture Medal for the National Bank of Australasia building in Collins Street (1938) (Willis 2012: 450). Meldrum went on to form Meldrum & Partners in 1959 before retiring from practice in 1965.

Meldrum & Noad were responsible for the design of a number of buildings in the Melbourne CBD, including the National Bank of Australasia, opened in 1939 at the corner of Collins and Williams

streets. An article of the time announced that the bank building was the first in the area to be built to the full height allowed by the City building regulations and therefore would have 'a decided influence on the future development' of that part of the city (*Journal of the RVIA* 1939:218). Meldrum & Noad also designed the BHP head office in Bourke Street, opened in 1958.

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

376-378 Bourke Street is located on the northern side of Bourke Street between Elizabeth and Queen streets. It is a five-storey commercial curtain wall building in the Post-War Modernist style. It exhibits key characteristics of the style, particularly in the lightweight fine-grained modularity of the curtain wall façade.

The façade to Bourke Street comprises an aluminium framed non-loadbearing curtain wall set within an outline frame that appears to be of off-form concrete that returns forming the side boundary wall to the east. The curtain wall comprises alternating vertically glazed and solid panels to provide a lightweight grid across the façade. The frame is natural aluminium finish and the solid panels appear to be of blue coloured glass, aligned at the level of the upper floors. At each of the upper levels there are three openable sashes as the building predates the use of air conditioning. The side wall to the eastern boundary is solid concrete.

The retail and entry shopfront to Bourke Street has been replaced over time, and there is a heavy suspended box awning over the ground floor entry lobby, which is not sympathetic to the delicate modularity of the façade above.

It is a modestly scaled example of its style and period.

## **INTEGRITY**

The building is highly intact with very few changes visible to original fabric. The original non-loadbearing aluminium curtain wall with its alternating vertically glazed and solid panels remains intact. At street level, shop fronts have been altered and a heavy suspended box awning added. The building also retains its original built form and scale, materials and stylistic details. Overall, the building is of high integrity.

## **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

The former Coles and Garrard Building at 376-378 Bourke Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of multi-storey commercial buildings designed in the 1950s.

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

### **State-significant places**

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

## Locally-significant places

### *Precinct Heritage Overlay*

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



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



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



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



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



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

### *Other Examples*

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



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



Former Atlas Assurance Building, 404-406 Collins Street (H Garnet Alsop & Partners, 1958-61) (Interim HO1008).





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



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



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



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



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



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



## Analysis

The former Coles and Garrard Building is comparable to other central Melbourne buildings included on the HO, including Gilbert House at 100-104 Collins Street (significant in HO504), Coates House at 20 Collins Street (significant in HO504), Mering House at 276-278 Collins Street (significant in HO502) and the former Guardian Assurance Company building at 404-406 Collins Street. At five storeys, the former Coles & Gerard building at 376-378 Bourke Street is substantially lower-scaled than these examples. However, it is a highly intact, good representative example of early curtain-walled office building, clearly expressing the design aesthetic of the style based on repetitive horizontal and vertical modules rather than a vertical differentiation as utilised by the classically derived styles.

As a full-glazed curtain wall building, and for its scale, the degree of intactness is increasingly uncommon. Other early examples of this type, such as the six-storey former SDA House, 8-12 Market Street (assessed but not recommended in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review) or the five-storey former National Insurance Company of New Zealand at 180 Queen (not recommended for assessment in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review) have been substantially altered resulting in the loss of key design elements.

All of these examples and the subject building demonstrate the prominent Bauhaus grid aesthetic made possible by the use of a lightweight aluminium curtain wall system which maximises access to daylight. The vertical grid pattern is typical of the style with vertically alternating clear glass and opaque panels. The structure retains a high level of integrity above the ground floor, comparing favourably with other examples of the style identified above.

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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

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*Argus*, 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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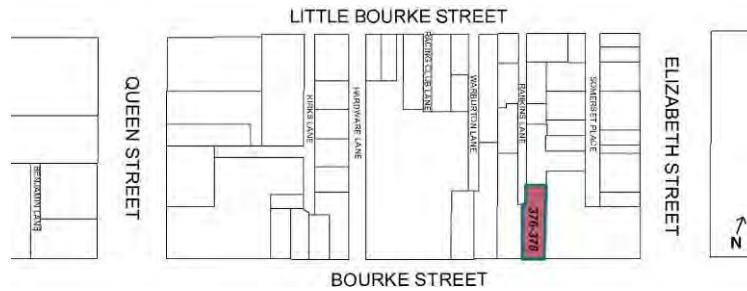


## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Former Coles and Garrard Building



**PS ref no:** [HOXXXXHO1306](#)



### What is significant?

The former Coles & Garrard Building at 376-378 Bourke Street, Melbourne, a curtain-walled postwar commercial building built in 1957 to a design by Meldrum & Noad, [is significant](#).

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

- Original building form and scale; ~~and~~
- Original non-loadbearing curtain wall.
- Later alterations, particularly at street level, are not significant.

### How it is significant?

The former Coles & Garrard Building at 376-378 Bourke Street is of local representative and associative significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

The former Coles and Garrard Building at 376-378 Bourke Street is significant as a highly intact example of the Post-War Modernist style offices utilised for commercial development in central Melbourne during the late 1950s and early 1960s. 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, designed by architects Meldrum & Noad, reflects the growth and progress in 1950s and 1960s Melbourne of locally established companies, resulting in many architecturally designed buildings being erected in the city. (Criteria D)

The former Coles & Garrard Building is significant for its long-term association with Victorian optometrists and spectacle makers, Coles & Garrard. The building was constructed for Coles & Garrard and the firm occupied the building for some 28 years, from 1958 to c1986. Coles & Garrard Pty Ltd, a Victorian-based company established in Melbourne in 1922, grew to become Melbourne's largest optometry firm, until it was taken over by OPSM in 1988. (Criterion H)

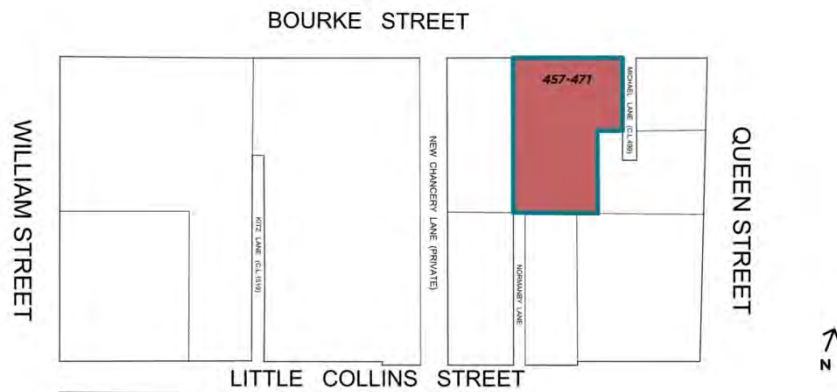
**Primary source**

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



<b>SITE NAME</b>	Former Dalgety House
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	457-471 Bourke Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	101152



**SURVEY DATE:** October 2019

**SURVEY BY:** GJM Heritage

**HERITAGE INVENTORY** No

**EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY** No

**PLACE TYPE** Individual Heritage Place

**PROPOSED CATEGORY** Significant

**FORMER GRADE** Ungraded

**DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:** Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners

**BUILDER:** Costain (Aust.) Pty Ltd

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

**DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:** 1966-1968





## 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
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Business and finance

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Retail, Merchant, Office
1920s	Retail/Workshop, Office, Caretaker
1960s	Workshop, Office, Merchant

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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

**Extent of overlay:** To extent of property boundary

## SUMMARY

The Former Dalgety House was designed by Sydney-based architects Peddle Thorp & Walker, with Meldrum & Partners as local supervising architects, and was constructed in 1966-68. Dalgety & New Zealand Loan Limited were the principal occupants of the building following its construction.

## CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

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

### Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

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

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

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

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

### **Beyond the curtain wall**

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

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

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

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

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

### **Business and finance in the postwar period**

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

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

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

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

## **SITE HISTORY**

The Former Dalgety House was designed by Sydney-based architects Peddle Thorp & Walker, with Meldrum & Partners as local supervising architects, and constructed in 1966-68 (Figure 1 - Figure 4). The builders were Costain (Aust.) Pty Ltd (*Age*, 5 Jun 1968:24; 10 Jul 1968:26).

A permit application for the multi-storey office building was received by City of Melbourne in October 1966 (with an estimated project cost of \$4,250,000) (BAI). The *Age* reported on the building in the 'financial heart of Melbourne', that was nearing completion in June 1968, describing the 18-storey building with a basement, carpark for 35 cars, and a Bourke Street entrance comprising a terrazzo plaza, colonnade, steps and a ramp (*Age*, 5 Jun 1968:24; 19 Jun 1968:15). Another contemporary newspaper article reported that a feature of the building was that the air conditioning ducts for the main system were installed around the perimeter of the building, saving heights on each storey (*Age*, 10 Jul 1968:26).

The 1970 Sands & McDougall Directory listed the primary occupant of the building as Dalgety & New Zealand Loan Limited. Dalgety and Company Ltd had occupied a portion of the site from the 1880s, addressed to 471 Bourke Street in 1890. In 1900, the Sands & McDougall Directories described the company as merchants and importers, stock and station agents, and woolbrokers. By the mid-twentieth century, Dalgety and Company Ltd was a world-wide establishment and one of the biggest wool selling brokers in the world (*Victor Harbour Times*, 17 Jun 1960:3). The earlier building at the subject site occupied by Dalgety and Company Ltd, as well as the adjacent Optical House Chambers

(next to Michael Lane at 457-459 Bourke Street), were demolished to make way for the present building (S&Mc).

A series of photos dating to 1969 show the newly completed building (Figure 5 – Figure 7). Above the entrance was the name 'Dalgety House'. The ground floor lift lobby was designed with a stained glass panel designed by artist Leonard French (Figure 8), the abstract design representing the sun. French is primarily known for his design of the stained glass ceiling at the National Gallery of Victoria (1968) and series of windows at the National Library in Canberra (1967), displaying a planet theme.

#### **Peddle Thorp & Walker, architects**

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

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

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

#### **Meldrum & Partners, architects**

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

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



Meldrum & Partners designed the multi-storey State Savings Bank building at 258-264 Little Bourke Street (1961) with Robert Cousland, and the State Electricity Commission building at 15 William Street (1965) (AIA). Meldrum & Partners acted as the local architects for Sydney-based firm Peddle Thorp & Walker, in the design and construction of Dalgety House on Bourke Street (1966-68) and Australia-Netherlands House on Collins Street (1968-70).

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



Figure 1. North (Bourke Street) elevation. Drawing by Peddle, Thorp & Walker, in association with Meldrum & Partners, dated August 1966 (BAP).

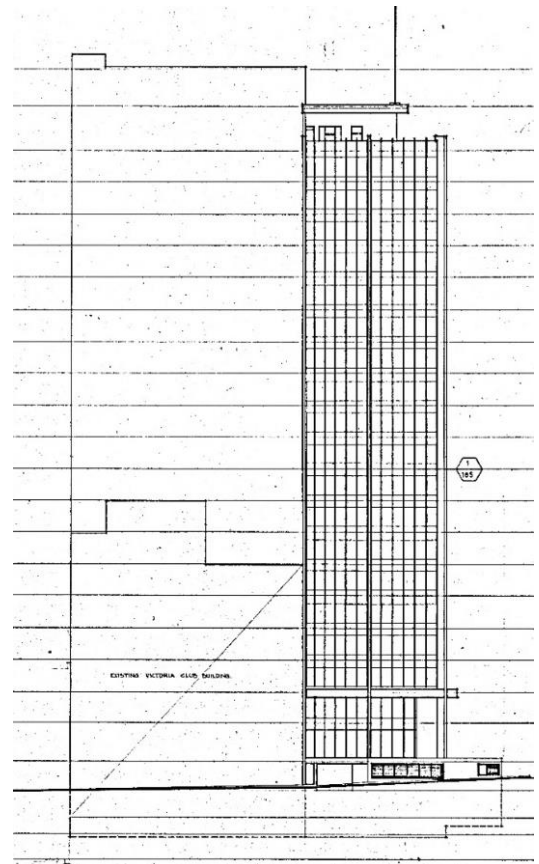


Figure 2. East (facing Queen Street) elevation. Drawings by Peddle, Thorp & Walker, in association with Meldrum & Partners, dated August 1966 (BAP).

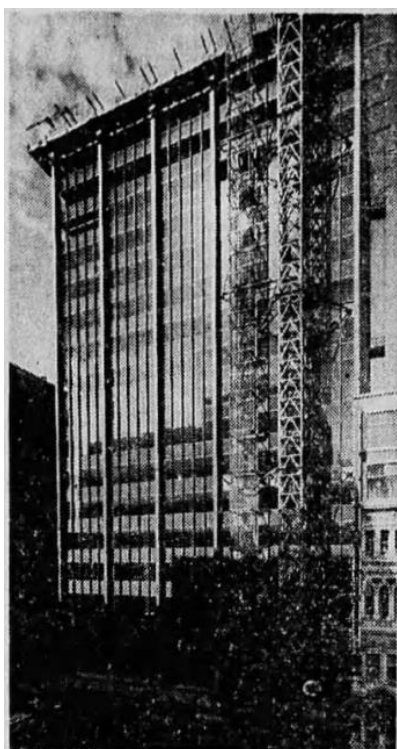


Figure 3. An image of the building nearing completion, published in *The Age* in June 1968 (*Age*, 5 Jun 1968:24).



Figure 4. An illustration of the building, published in *The Age* in June 1968 (*Age*, 19 Jun 1968:15).



Figure 5. The newly completed building in 1969 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/364).



Figure 6. Photo dating to 1969 (Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/365).



Figure 7. The building in 1969 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/368).





Figure 8. A 1969 photo of the stained glass panel in the ground floor lift lobby, designed by artist Leonard French (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/379).

### SITE DESCRIPTION

The Former Dalgety House at 457-471 Bourke Street is an 18-storey commercial building located on the south side of Bourke Street between William and Queen streets. Constructed in 1966-68 to a design by Peddle Thorp & Walker, with Meldrum & Partners as local supervising architects, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

The Former Dalgety House is a T-shaped building with broad frontage to Bourke Street which is set back approximately 6.5 metres behind a small raised plaza area. The building comprises a plant room at roof level and a basement carpark which is accessed from Bourke Street (via Michael Lane) at the eastern boundary of the site, and from the rear (via Little Collins Street and Normanby Lane) which leads to the rear of the building, at the western side.

The building is of reinforced concrete column and slab construction with articulated facades to the north and west which are grid-like in appearance. These facades are fully glazed with rows of rectangular aluminium-framed windows alternating with precast concrete spandrels, possibly clad with opaque brown glass.

These rows are set between thin protruding piers which ascend continuously from a street level arcade to the crown of the building and appear to be clad with vertically ribbed metal sheeting. Six piers divide the front façade into five bays, with matching piers at the corners of the building. The resulting dominant verticality is accentuated by continuous mullions which clearly divide the rows of windows and spandrels into vertical bays between piers, and the absence of a parapet line to provide termination to the vertical elements.

At street level the form of the raised entrance plaza has been retained, however modifications include reconfigured stairs and retaining walls and the addition of a glazed canopy. The form of the double-height building podium has also been retained, however columns and fascias have been reclad and shops inserted with fully glazed shopfronts. The continuous podium fascia has obscured the original individual fascia sections which spanned between the podium piers and continued the vertical emphasis of the design scheme.

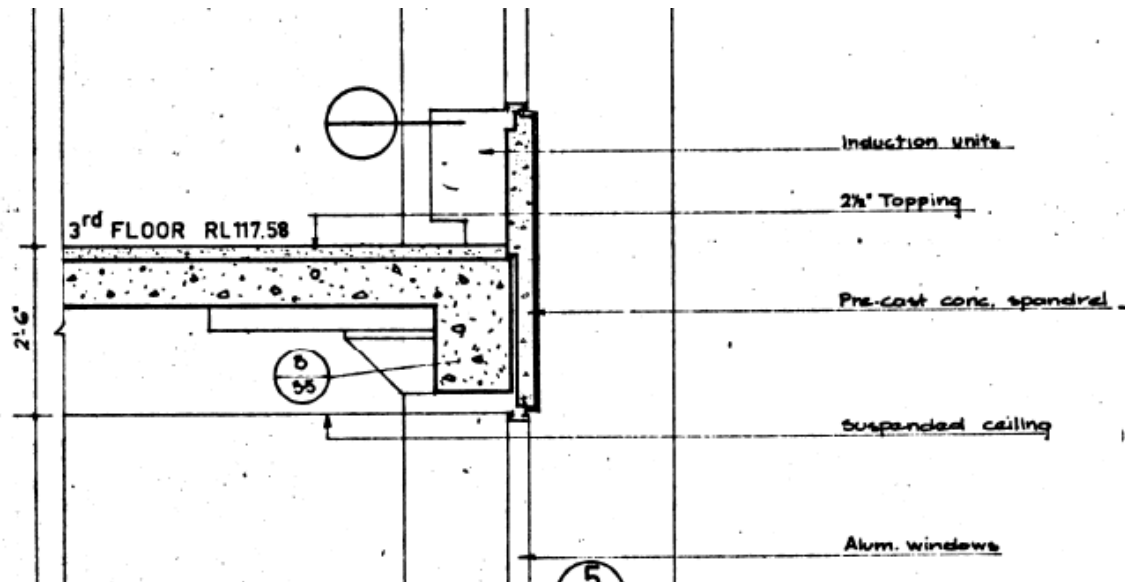


Figure 9. Drawing 38528-48, Building Application Plan, showing pre-cast concrete spandrel (BAP).

## INTEGRITY

The Former Dalgety House, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building above street level, remains highly intact to its original construction in 1966-68. Works to the building at street level have altered the original design of this frontage.

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

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The Former Dalgety House at 457-471 Bourke Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of a 1960s to mid 1970s multi-storey commercial building design. The building's two grid-like curtain walls (front and west side) of dominant vertical mullions and piers, and rows of aluminium framed glazing and opaque brown glass spandrels, can be clearly observed from Bourke Street and Michael Lane. Despite the redesign of the street-level facade, the upper facades of the Former Dalgety House 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 Dalgety House. These are detailed below.



### State-significant places

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

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

### Locally-significant places

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

#### *Precinct Heritage Overlay*



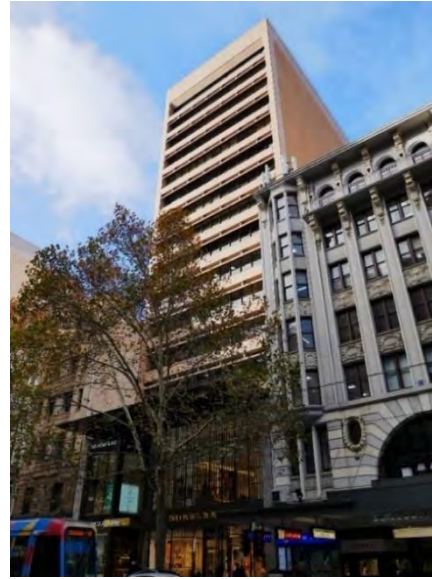
Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



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



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



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

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



Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

#### *Other examples*

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





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



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



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



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



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



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

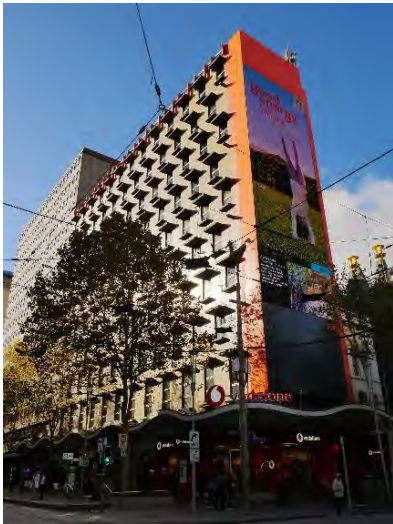




Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



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



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



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



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



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





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



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)



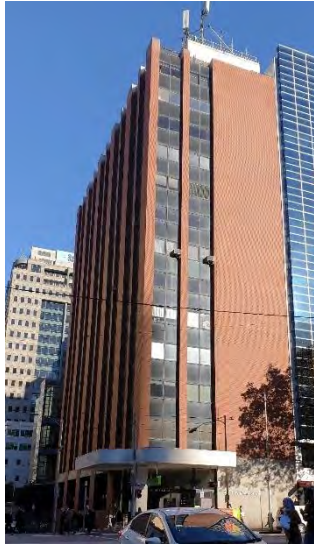
Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



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 Post-War Modernist commercial building, the Former Dalgety House at 457-471 Bourke 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 Dalgety House 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).

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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*

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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** 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 Dalgety House

**PS ref no:** [HO1309HOXXXX](#)



### What is significant?

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The Former Dalgety House, 457-471 Bourke Street, a multi-storey office building constructed in 1966-68.

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 frontage are not significant.

### How it is significant?

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The Former Dalgety House at 457-471 Bourke Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

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Constructed in 1966-68 to a design by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners, the Former Dalgety House has a clear association with the postwar building boom which transformed central Melbourne into a modern high-rise city. The design of these commercial buildings from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s – many of which were architect designed – was driven by the commercial demands and the prestige afforded by a dominant city presence (Criterion A).

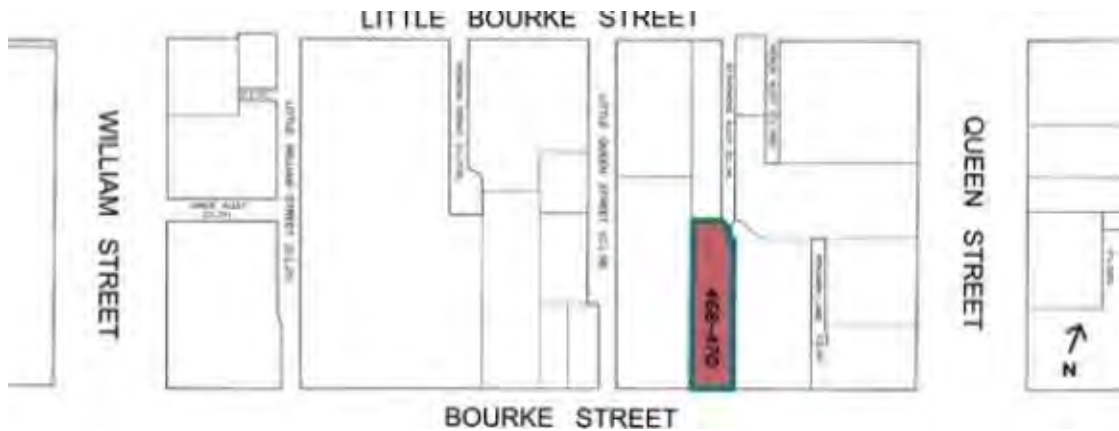
The Former Dalgety House is a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building. The building strongly reflects the style which was popular in the 1960s to the mid 1970s, particularly in central Melbourne. Constructed as an 18-storey building, the Former Dalgety House clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a 1960s to mid 1970s structure, including two adjacent grid-like curtain walls (front and west sides) of dominant vertical mullions and piers with rows of aluminium framed glazing and opaque brown glass spandrels, as well as the use of materials such as opaque glass and aluminium cladding and window frames. 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 London Assurance House [also known as Law Institute of Victoria]
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	468-470 Bourke Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	101181



<b>SURVEY DATE:</b> May 2017		<b>SURVEY BY:</b> Context	
<b>HERITAGE INVENTORY</b>	No	<b>EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY</b>	Yes – interim controls HO1006
<b>PLACE TYPE</b>	Individual Heritage Place	<b>PROPOSED CATEGORY</b>	Significant
<b>DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:</b>	Bernard Evans	<b>FORMER GRADE</b>	B
		<b>BUILDER:</b>	Not known
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Postwar Period (1945-1965)	<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	1960



## THEMES

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

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	St Patrick's Hall
1920s	St Patrick's Hall
1960s	Office (insurance)

## 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 London Assurance House at 468-470 Bourke Street, now the Law Institute of Australia, is a postwar curtain wall office building completed in 1960. It occupies the site of the former St Patrick's Hall which housed the first sitting of the Victorian Parliament in 1851.

## CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

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

### Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

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

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

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

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

### **Business and finance in the postwar period**

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

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

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

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

### **SITE HISTORY**

The Crown Record Plan notes that the site at which 468-470 Bourke Street is located was owned by Henry Elmes, later purchased by the St Patrick's Society in 1846.

*One of Melbourne's first halls, St Patrick's Hall was designed by Samuel Jackson and built on land purchased by the St Patrick's Society in 1846 at 85 (470) Bourke Street West. Dedicated 'to the memory of Ireland', it opened in 1849 for meetings and as a school for Irish children.*

*Victoria's Legislative Council met there from 13 November 1851 until the construction of the new Parliament House in 1856. For many years a mustering point for the annual St Patrick's Day procession and the Druids' Easter procession, the hall was demolished in 1957. Its original Speaker's chair is now displayed in Queen's Hall (eMelbourne, Andrew May, accessed 20 Jun 2017).*

St Patrick's Hall was replaced by the London Assurance Building in mid-1957. Estimated to cost £300,000, the new building was designed by architect Sir Bernard Evans, who employed a highly successful glass curtain wall in its design (Figure 1).

The professional journal *Architecture and Arts* reported on the new building, observing that it was located on the site of St Patrick's Hall where the first Victorian parliament met in 1851: a bronze commemoration plaque was retained on the site. They also noted that the London Assurance company had been operating since it received its Royal Charter from King George I in 1720.

In 1965, the periodical *Building Ideas* published a special edition for the Fourteenth Australian Architectural Convention to display the City's architectural wealth, with tour guides compiled by architect and academic, Neville Quarry, and others. London Assurance House was listed among the showcase of modern and heritage architecture in the guide to Melbourne's best architecture. London Assurance House was constructed during a time of major development in buildings for insurance or assurance in the city centre, which cemented Melbourne's pre-eminent role as a place for financial institutions.



Figure 1. 468-470 Bourke Street in 1959. (Source: Sievers 1959, SLV H2003.100/219 [copyright](#))

#### *Bernard Evans, architect*

Bernard Evans (1905-1981) was an architect, builder and civic leader. Born in Manchester, his family emigrated to Australia in 1913 and Bernard worked for his father as a designer and builder. He studied at the Working Man's College (now RMIT University) and established Premier Building Company in 1928. His expansive career spanned a period as Melbourne City Councillor (1949-1973), Lord Mayor (1959, 1960) and work on flats and public housing. His work in the 1950s and 60s was concerned with office buildings and the Emerald Hill Court Estate in South Melbourne. His impressive Ampol House (1958) with the spiral staircase at the corner of Grattan Street and Elizabeth Street was demolished in 2012.

Evans campaigned for the removal of the 132-foot height limit (40 metre) for buildings in the city centre. His architectural firm of Bernard Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking Pty Ltd was disbanded in 1975 following Evans' resignation in 1971. (Goad & Willis eds., 2012: 237-8).

## SITE DESCRIPTION

An aluminium and glass curtain wall is set back within the building's façade to create a picture frame effect, bordered by stone facing to the perimeter frame. Slim black-framed hopper-sash windows open from alternate midpoints of the window glazing. By contrast, the curtain's frame is natural aluminium. The much-favoured mushroom colour was applied to the spandrel glass (since modified with panels of a bold vertical contrasting stripe).

Goad notes that

*It displays the scale and modulation that enabled such generously glazed buildings to fit comfortably within Melbourne's 19th century structure while being clad in the latest building materials (Goad 1999).*

The new building was modern in its design, utilising light-weight building techniques such as open web floor beams protected by vermiculite.

Completing the illusion of total transparency central to modernism, an almost mullion-less glazed entry screen fills the whole gap left by the structure. A miniature replica of the building's structural casing surrounds two pivoted, slimly framed glass doors central to the entrance; completing the symmetry and simplicity of the façade.

One upper level was reserved for car parking accessed from the rear. Modern elevators were installed and despite the hopper sashes on the façade, all floors were airconditioned by a high velocity medium pressure double duct system. The entrance attracted attention with its travertine faced walls, green marble insets, gold ceramic tile panels, and marble stairs and floors. It also had an illuminated ceiling that was then a very new concept, and now removed. The service core ran down the east side of the building.

## INTEGRITY

A 1959 photograph of the building shows that there has only minor changes to its existing form, with the removal of the building name from the first level fascia and the added coloured spandrels beneath the windows as the only major differences.

The ground level interior is relatively well preserved and the exterior is generally original. Internal foyer finishes also appear to be early or original, including the white marble stairs and the travertine marble walls.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The former London Assurance House at 468-470 Bourke Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of multi-storey commercial buildings designed in the 1950s.

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



### State-significant places

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

### Locally-significant places

#### *Precinct Heritage Overlay*

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



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



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



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



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



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

### *Other Examples*

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



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



Former Atlas Assurance Building, 404-406 Collins Street (H Garnet Alsop & Partners, 1958-61) (Interim HO1008).





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



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



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



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



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



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

**Analysis**

The former London Assurance House has maintained a relatively high level of integrity when compared with other examples from this typology. It is highly representative of the period of postwar modern office buildings using curtain wall glazing, and is comparable to other central Melbourne examples such as 376-378 Bourke Street and 276-278 Collins Street (recommended as individually significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review). Whilst not the earliest, it is a fine example and somewhat unusual with the hopper sashes and the streamlined ground floor glazing.

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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*

Goad, P 1999, *Melbourne Architecture*.

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

National Trust Classification Report

Sievers, Wolfgang 1959, '[London Assurance House], Bourke St. South side between Queen & William Streets', State Library of Victoria: Wolfgang Sievers collection, accessed online June 2019.

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

### *General sources*

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

Melbourne City Council on-line i-Heritage database;

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

Daily newspaper reports such as 'The Argus';

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

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

Twentieth Century Architecture Register of Royal Australian Institute of Architects

Graeme Butler, 1982-3, Twentieth Century Architecture Register of Royal Australian Institute of Architects: cites Neville Quarry, 'building ideas' (monthly published by CSR Building Materials Vol. 2, No. 11, March 1965, pp 2-26 March 1965, pp 2-26: Building 100 guide for Architectural Convention; Building Permit Applications 7/8/1957, 31434; 1/6/1959, 33368 (partitions at £1300); 'Architecture and the Arts', (Melbourne periodical) 4/1959: 35

### *Other sources*

Law institute web site 2010

<http://www.liv.asn.au/News-and-Publications/Law-Institute-Journal/Archived-Issues/LIJ-March-2009/LIVCelebrating-150-years> (Law Institute).

Sands & McDougall Melbourne or Victorian Directories

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

**PREVIOUS STUDIES GRADINGS**

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**Central Activities District  
Conservation Study 1985** B

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**Central City Heritage  
Study Review 1993** B

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

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011** B

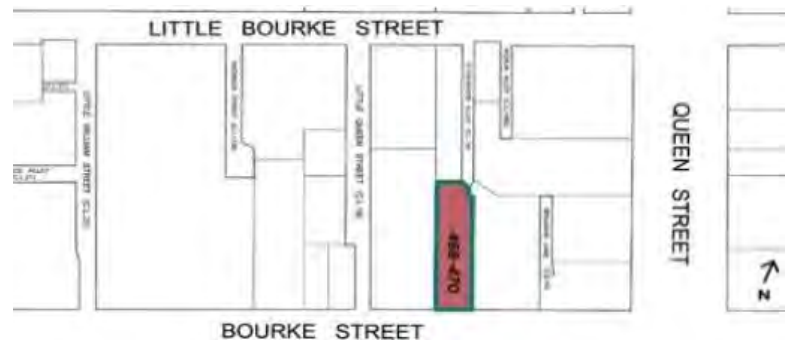
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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Former London Assurance House



**PS ref no:** HO1006XXXX



### What is significant?

The former London Assurance House at 468-470 Bourke Street, Melbourne; now the Law Institute of Victoria, completed in 1960 and designed by architect, developer, former Melbourne City Councillor and Mayor, Bernard Evans.

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 are not significant.

### How it is significant?

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The former London Assurance House at 468-470 Bourke Street is of historical, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

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468-470 Bourke Street is historically significant as the original location of St Patrick's Hall of 1849, which was built on land purchased by the St Patrick's Society in 1846. In 1851 the hall was the first meeting place of the Victorian Parliament.

The former London Assurance House, now the Law Institute of Victoria, is historically significant for its association with the rapid growth of the insurance and assurance industry in the 1950s-1960s. These companies used new city office buildings as a form of promotion and fund investment, contributing to Melbourne's pre-eminent role as the preferred Australian location for large financial institutions.

The former London Assurance House is historically significant for its association with Bernard Evans; architect, Melbourne City Councillor (1949-73) and former Lord Mayor (1959-60). It is one of many city buildings designed by Evans in his long career as a city developer, architect and principal of the architectural practice Bernard Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking Pty Ltd. (Criterion A)

The former London Assurance House is significant as a highly intact, curtain-walled office building from the postwar period demonstrating the style embraced by local architects by the late 1950s. In particular it employs a curtain-wall façade that creates bold contrasts between the clear glazing and solid spandrels. (Criterion D)

The former London Assurance House is aesthetically significant for its ground floor entry glazing designed as a replica of the 'picture frame' in stone facing that surrounds the whole building. The curtain wall is unusual in its design with the horizontal rectangular windows placed across the façade. Whilst some glazing panels have been replaced, the overall pattern of the façade has been retained. It is aesthetically significant for its lightness of structure, elegant transparency and curtain wall glazing of unusual pattern. The building has been identified by at least two key architectural publications including *Architecture and Arts* and in Melbourne's best architecture guide of 1965. (Criterion E)

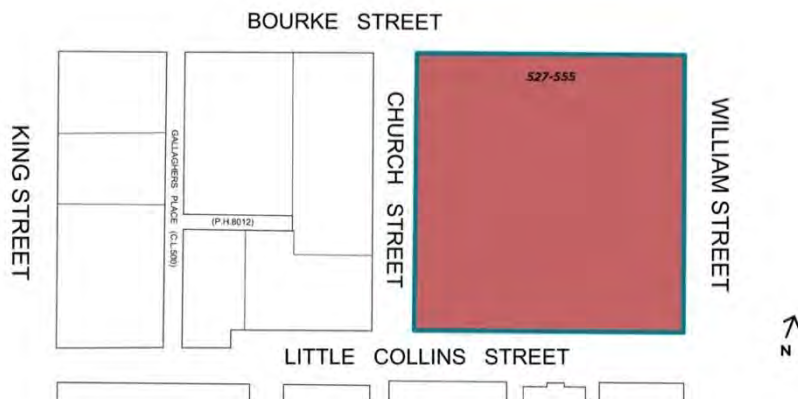
### Primary source

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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>	AMP Tower and St James Building Complex
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	527-555 Bourke Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	101155



**SURVEY DATE:** October 2019

**SURVEY BY:** GJM Heritage

**HERITAGE INVENTORY**

No

**EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY**

No

**PLACE TYPE**

Individual Heritage Place

**PROPOSED CATEGORY**

Significant

**FORMER GRADE**

Ungraded

**DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:**

Skidmore Owings & Merrill  
in association with Bates  
Smart & McCutcheon

**BUILDER:**

E A Watts Pty Ltd

**DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:**

Postwar Period (1945-1975)

**DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:**

1965-1969



## THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
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POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style 1.9 Beyond the curtain wall
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Business and finance

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Office, Hall, Carrier
1920s	Office, Merchant, Education, Workshop
1960s	Café/Restaurant, Merchant, Office, Retail, Studio

## 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 AMP Tower, the St James Building, and the associated public plaza were designed by the international architectural firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill, in association with the prominent Melbourne firm Bates Smart & McCutcheon, the latter also serving as the structural, mechanical and electrical engineers. The commercial complex was constructed in 1965-69, by builders E A Watts Pty Ltd.

## CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

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

### Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

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

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

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

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

### **Beyond the curtain wall**

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

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

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

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

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

### **Business and finance in the postwar period**

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



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

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

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

## SITE HISTORY

The AMP Tower, the St James Building, and the associated public plaza were designed by the international architectural firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill, in association with the prominent Melbourne firm Bates Smart & McCutcheon, the latter also serving as the structural, mechanical and electrical engineers. The commercial complex was constructed in 1965-69, by builders E A Watts Pty Ltd (Goad et al. 1993; *Cross-Section*, Dec 1969; *Architect*, May/June 1970:13).

The AMP Tower forms part of a collection of postwar high-rise buildings at the intersection of Bourke and William streets, which originally included the AMP Tower, BHP House, ACI House and Shell House (the last demolished in the 1980s) (Goad 2001: 270-271). A contemporary article published in 1970 (*Architect* May/June 1970:14) commented that each building was a:

*...careful exercise in the modern classical style. Taken together, the same classic principles should help to bring them into a coherent group. The variations, however, prove to be a powerful disruptive force. The result is merely a further contribution to Melbourne's visual chaos (Architect May/June 1970:14).*

The site was formerly occupied by St James School (associated with St James Cathedral adjacent; Melbourne's earliest surviving church, which was relocated to the corner of King and Batman streets), St James Street and St James Buildings (1889). The two-acre site was acquired from the Anglican Church by the AMP Society in 1963 (Goad et al. 1993; NTAV: VHD; *Cross-Section* Mar 1963:2).

While the architectural drawings (Figure 1 - Figure 3, Figure 5) note that Bates Smart & McCutcheon were the architects and engineers and Skidmore Owings & Merrill were the consulting architects, contemporary publications reported that Skidmore Owings & Merrill were the leading design firm. The San Francisco office of Skidmore Owings & Merrill were appointed in 1963 and carried out a three stage process comprising a programme, schematic design and design development. All documentation past the design development stage and supervision of construction was the responsibility of Bates Smart & McCutcheon, with Skidmore Owings and Merrill acting as consultants. The designers in the San Francisco office were Chuck Bassett, Richard Foster and Mark Goldstein, with Helmut Jacoby responsible for the perspective drawings (Goad 2004b:198).

Goad et al. (1993) noted that the design was informed by the precedent of Eero Saarinen's CBS Tower in New York (1962-64). The AMP Tower was designed to accommodate the client's needs and future expansion, while the St James Building was designed for tenancies on lease, with shops at the plaza level and five floors of office space above (*Architect*, May/June 1970:13). The entire site below ground level was designed to provide a car park and staff amenities, including a 248-seat theatre, cafeteria for 290 people, an executive dining room for 80 people, a gymnasium, squash court and games room (*Architect*, May/June 1970:13). The inclusion of the plaza was an important design aspect of the overall composition (Goad et al. 1993; Taylor & Stewart 2001:270).

The AMP Tower was a concrete encased steel post and beam construction, while the St James Building was a reinforced concrete beam and slab construction, 'complicated by torsional stresses induced by the angled colonnade' (*Architect*, May/June 1970:13). Both were finished externally with polished panels of reconstructed granite, and bronze-tinted glass in anodised aluminum frames (Goad et al. 1993; Taylor & Stewart 2001:270; *Architect*, May/June 1970:13). An advertisement in a 1974 architectural journal noted that the AMP Tower was clad with 'reconstructed granite-faced precast concrete wall units' (AIA, Nov/Dec 1974:8). The mullions on the face of the AMP Tower were used as vertical droppers for the dual-duct air conditions system (*Architect*, May/June 1970:13). The top level of the St James Building originally had copper cladding to the exterior (BAP).

Artist Clement Meadmore was commissioned to create a sculpture for the plaza, 'Awakening' (created in 1968; Figure 10 & Figure 11), a 'massive bent box of Corten steel' (Goad et al. 1993) (removed in 2010). Meadmore (1929-2005) earned international fame for his sculptures, many of which were designed for public spaces in Australia and the USA (DAOO; Clement Meadmore; *Architect* May/June 1970:14). Artist Michael Young received the commission for a stainless steel sculpture for the foyer of the St James Building. The two sculptures were 'important examples of the uncompromisingly minimalist expression of art of the late 1960s' (Goad et al. 1993).

The complex was the first project to enclose space with a mix of high and low-rise buildings in the central activity district (Goad et al. 1993). The AMP Tower, rising 26 storeys to 372 feet above plaza level, was temporarily Melbourne's tallest building, until 1972 (*Architect*, May/June 1970:13; CoMMaps). The total cost of the project was \$20,000,000 (Goad et al. 1993; Taylor & Stewart 2001:270).

The project prompted discussion in the architectural world at the time. The publication *Architect* discussed the complex in 1969 (May/June 1969:12):

*The design, nevertheless, is pure S.O.M. [Skidmore Owings and Merrill] and it is as clever as to be expected. A low L-shaped block is the minor of the two elements. It exploits to good effect two fashionable devices: the light-angle set-back in section, and the 45-degree*

*diagonal line in plan. It hugs the two back streets of the island block and makes a handsome background and foil to the major element: a strong, straight, square tower on the corner of the intersection.*

*Architect* further discussed the project in their May/June edition in 1970 (p13):

*The complex is monumental; but it is ivy-league monumental masonry, a premature gravestone marking the last resting place of a far-from-moribund financial giant. The resulting image is "hyper-real", belonging to another, sinister, space-time continuum, parallel but not identical with our own. This quality of other-worldliness is becoming more commonplace in the architecture of U.S.A. ...*

*The external surfaces of both the A.M.P. Tower and the St. James building consist mainly of glass and reconstructed granite. The finish is perfectly smooth and highly polished, so that the buildings appear to be carved out of monoliths, rather than as sets of joined elements.*

The 1970 article continues to comment on the dynamic design of the sloping walls of St James and their interplay with the plaza space.

The Melbourne University publication *Cross-Section* published articles with images in 1969 and 1970 (Figure 11). The January 1970 issue of *Cross-Section* (Jan 1970) noted:

*... the most outstanding visible feature is the unusual angled façade to the St James building. This is sloped away from the tower block to permit maximum sunlight to the plaza and lower floors. It is also angled 45° towards Bourke and William Streets to provide maximum daylight in offices ... The whole of the façade of both buildings is faced in reconstructed granite slabs up to 30' high and 4' wide. Contracts were let to two suppliers to provide the 305,000 square feet of cladding required. To ensure uniformity of colour from both suppliers a new granite quarry was opened at Mudgee in N.S.W. ... It is apparent that a great deal of thought has gone into the selection of both exterior and interior finishes to achieve an effective balance of two major requirements – beauty and ease of maintenance. Reconstructed granite, anodized aluminium and blue stone paving are used extensively on the outside while marble, stainless steel and vinyl wall coverings are featured internally.*

In 1972, *Architect* published the following (Mar/Apr 1972:17):

*...the complex is a simple massing that is one of several possible solutions to the planar and volumetric requirements of the client and the various controlling government bodies. Granted that, is very little more. The sole attempt to avoid banality within the buildings themselves, seem to lie in the external faceting of the columns, and in the splayed and angled colonnade.*

A low-scale addition has more recently been constructed off the AMP Tower providing for shopfronts, and the plaza partially infilled in 2012-13 (NTAV 2014:70). The St James Building was refurbished c2014 by Metier 3 Architects, which included a vertical addition (CoMMaps).

**Skidmore Owings & Merrill**

Skidmore Owings & Merrill is a US-based firm, established in Chicago in 1936 by architects Louis Skidmore and Nathaniel Owings, with engineer William Merrill joining the practice in 1939. It grew to become one of the largest architectural practices in the US and in the 1950s was particularly admired for its expertise in curtain wall construction.

Skidmore Owings & Merrill has collaborated with a number of Australian practices since its establishment. In the 1960s, the firm worked with Buchan, Laird and Buchan on the design of Shell House on the corner of Bourke and William streets (1960, demolished), with Bates Smart & McCutcheon on the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex at the corner of Bourke and William streets (1965-69), and with Yuncken Freeman on BHP House, 140 William Street (1967-73) (Goad 2012:631).

Skidmore Owings & Merrill remains one of the largest architectural, interior design, engineering and urban planning firms in the world, with offices in New York, San Francisco, LA, Washington DC, Seattle, London, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Dubai and Mumbai.

**Bates Smart & McCutcheon**

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

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

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

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

(1961-62) and the Methodist Church Centre at 130-134 Little Collins Street (1966-67) with F C Armstrong.

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

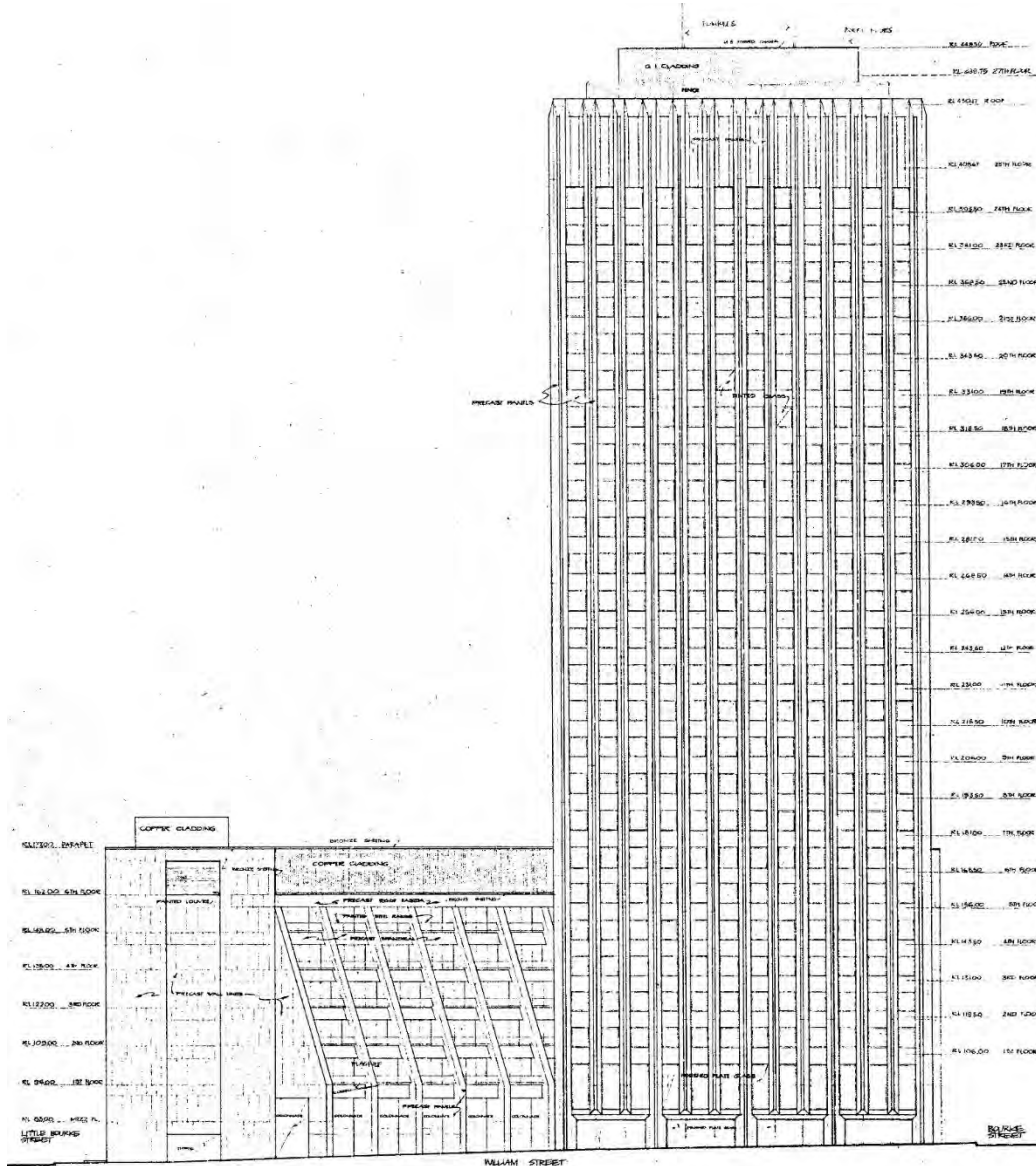


Figure 1. East elevation from William Street. Drawing by and Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, dated October 1965 (BAP).



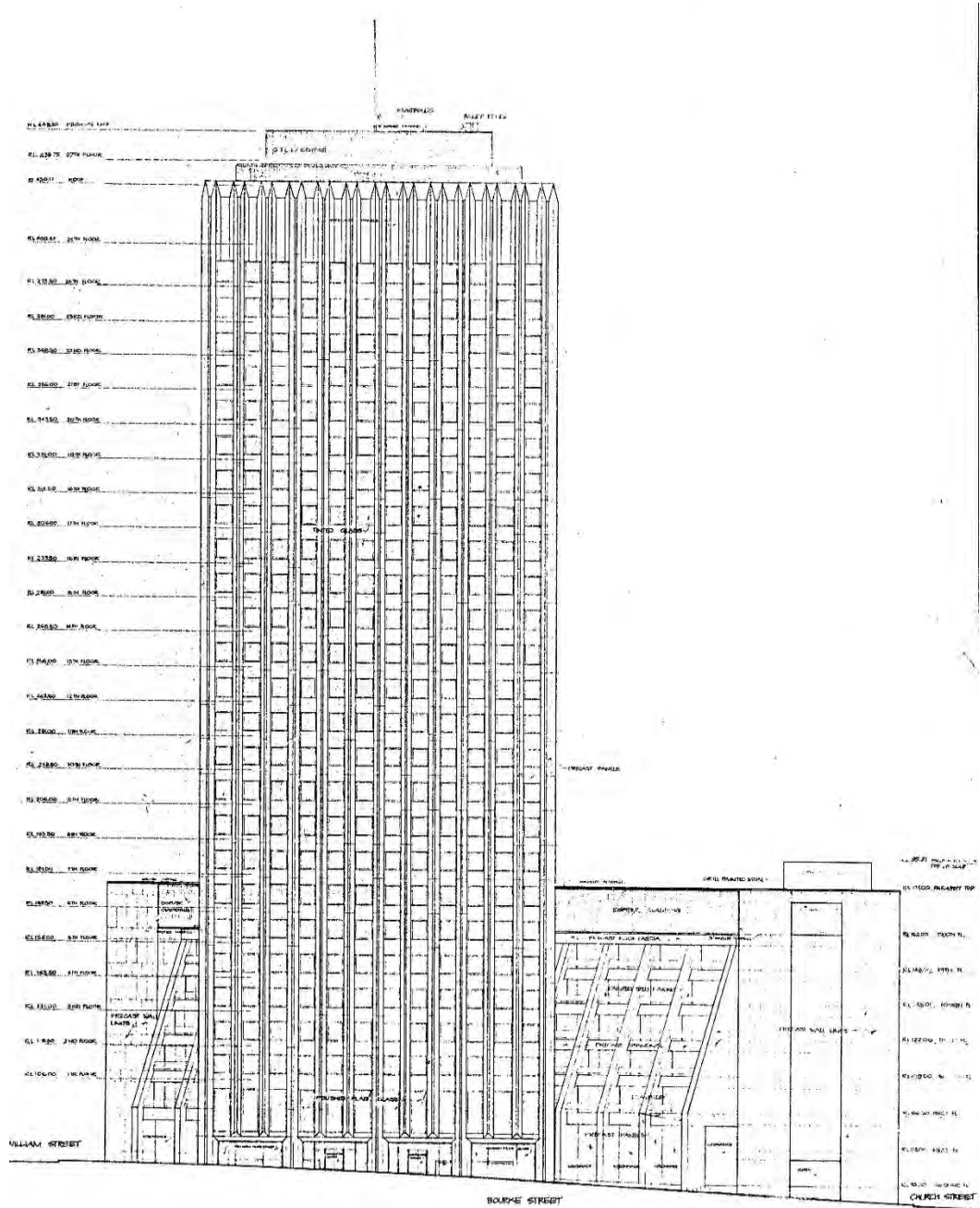


Figure 2. North elevation from Bourke Street. Drawing by and Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, dated October 1965 (BAP).

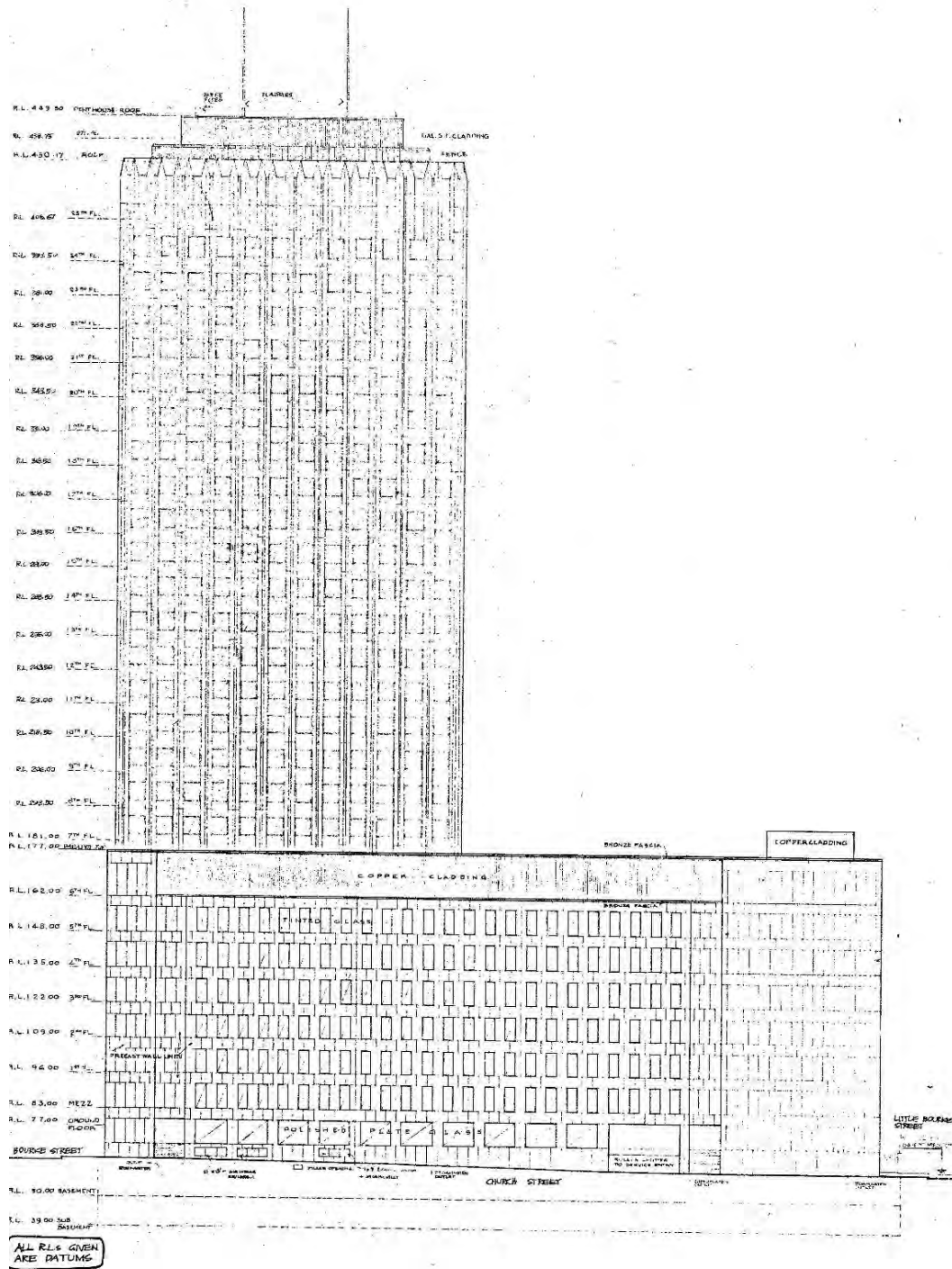


Figure 3. West elevation from Church Street. Drawing by and Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, dated October 1965 (BAP).



Figure 4. Illustration of the complex, viewed from William Street (Taylor & Stewart 2001:68).

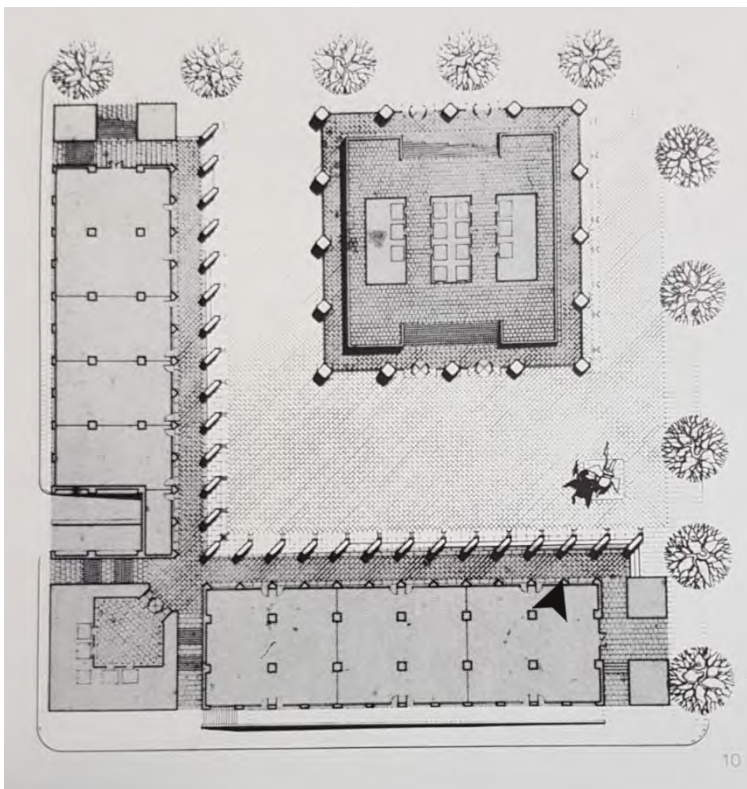


Figure 5. Site plan of the complex by architects Bates Smart & McCutcheon (date not confirmed) (Taylor & Stewart 2001:68).



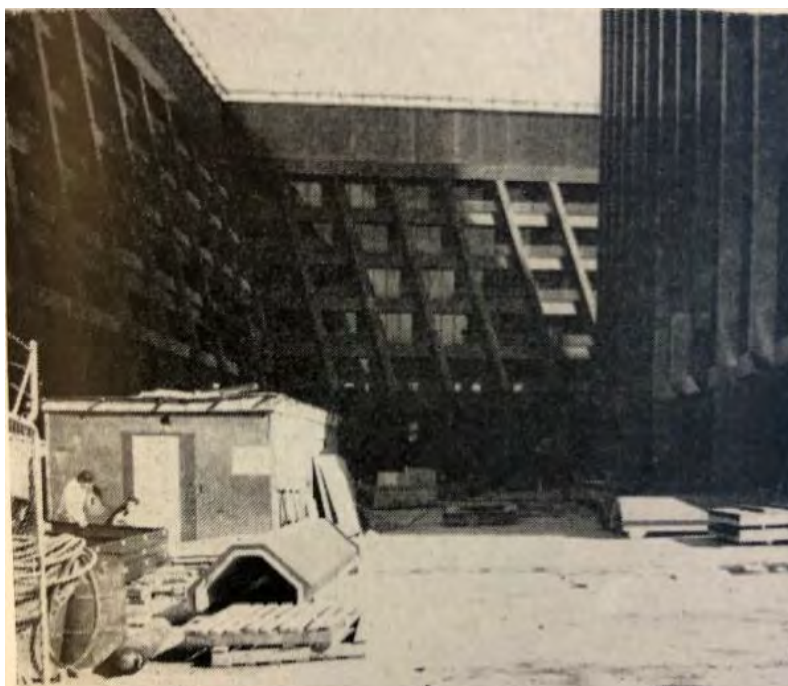


Figure 6. The buildings under construction, image published in the May/June 1969 edition of *Architect*.



Figure 7. The complex under construction in 1969 (NLA, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, object 160948487).



Figure 8. The AMP Tower under construction in 1969 (NLA, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, object 160948175).



Figure 9. Photo of the newly completed complex, published in the May/June 1970 edition of *Architect* (May/Jun 1970:12).





Figure 10. The complex and Meadmore sculpture; date of photo not confirmed (Taylor & Stewart 2001:68).



Figure 11. Detail of the St James building and Clement Meadmore's sculpture in the plaza. Photo published in January 1970 (*Cross-Section*, No. 206, 1 January 1970).



Figure 12. The complex in 1970 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/214).



Figure 13. The complex and Meadmore's sculpture in 1970 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/217).

### SITE DESCRIPTION

The AMP Tower and St James Building Complex at 527-555 Bourke Street is a 26-storey commercial tower building and adjacent six-storey commercial building, set in a bluestone-paved urban plaza at the south-west corner of Bourke and William streets. Occupying half a city block, it is a substantial complex with tall tower at the intersection and low-scale L-shaped St James Building which wraps around the south and west sides of the tower. Constructed in 1965-69 to designs by American

architects Skidmore Owings and Merrill, in association with Melbourne architects Bates Smart & McCutcheon, the complex is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

The tall AMP Tower is a free-standing building which provides the focus at the corner of the large 1.9 acres (.77 hectares) site. Square in plan with four identical grid-like facades, the tower is of concrete encased steel column and beam construction with central service core providing lateral stability. In contrast, the low-scale L-shaped St James Building is of reinforced concrete column and slab construction. Both buildings are clad with large reconstructed granite-faced precast concrete wall panels, with granite obtained from a new quarry opened for this purpose, and have bronze-tinted glazing in anodised aluminium frames.

The identical facades of the AMP Tower are grid-like in appearance with a dominant vertical emphasis provided by angled piers which are formed from precast concrete panels. Recessed behind these solid piers are alternating rows of precast concrete spandrels and windows which are divided into repetitive square units. The vertical piers rise to the top of the building, where a deep cornice is created by the addition of intermediary elements, formed from precast concrete panels.

Accentuated by double-height windows at first floor level, the base of the building was originally recessed behind a colonnade which was formed from the four angled corner piers and the continuation of three of the intermediate piers at each façade. Other piers terminate at first floor level with a chamfered edge. Despite some infill of the resulting colonnade, this arrangement is clearly visible at the north façade facing Bourke Street.

The L-shaped St James Building provides a background to the major tower element and encloses the site. The main facades of this building face north and east, towards the tower and into a paved plaza located between buildings. Secondary facades face Little Collins Street to the south and Church Street to the west and a service core is located at the junction of the two wings. The main facades appear as a complex grid of solid concrete elements with projecting piers which are angled at 45 degrees in plan from the main building. An additional light-angle set back of the plaza facades above ground level, incorporates cranked balustraded balconies.

Various modifications have been made to the two buildings and the plaza. These include:

- A two-storey glazed pavilion-like structure has been added at street-level to the east façade of the tower
- Single-storey glazed pavilion-like structures have been added to the main facades of the St James Building
- A substantial roof top addition has been made to the St James Building
- Shopfronts have been inserted in the ground floor colonnades of parts of the tower
- The western portion of the plaza has been covered with transparent roofing.

Parts of the original bluestone paving of the plaza may have been retained, however garden beds have been inserted, ramps have been installed, the original sculpture has been removed and additions to the buildings have reduced the amount of open area.

## **INTEGRITY**

The AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the buildings above street level, remains largely intact to its original construction in 1965-69. Works to the building, including street level alterations and additions, and roof top additions to the

St James Building, have altered the original design. The overall form of the public plaza has been substantially retained.

Overall, the complex retains a high degree of architectural integrity to the Post-War Modernist style in fabric, form and detail. While it has undergone some alterations, these changes do not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the buildings and their plaza setting as a fine example of a Post-War Modernist multi-storey commercial building.

### **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

Set on a large and prominent city site, the AMP Tower and St James Building Complex at 527-555 Bourke Street is a complex which comprises three important elements – a high-rise tower, a low-rise L-shaped horizontal block and an open plaza. The complex is a representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and the tower clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of 1960s to mid 1970s multi-storey commercial building design. In combination these elements form a rare example of a public space enclosed by a tower and perimeter block in the CBD.

This large-scale urban and architectural design was a major Melbourne landmark in the 1960s and was widely critiqued in contemporary architectural journals. The size and complexity of the development, the design of the two related buildings, the unusual provision of a large public plaza in association with office development (the corporate concern for open public space and public amenity within the city was commonly noted) and the association with the American architects Skidmore Owings and Merrill were all considered to be notable aspects of the development.

#### ***The Buildings***

The grid-like walls of the freestanding multi-storey AMP Tower, the innovative grid-like walls of the associated St James Building and the extensive use of reconstructed granite-faced precast concrete panels and bronze-tinted glazing in anodised aluminium frames, can be clearly observed from surrounding streets and from within the plaza itself. Despite additions and alterations made to the complex, the plan form of the complex and the upper facades of the buildings remain highly intact to illustrate the important period of construction of the buildings.

The AMP Tower itself can be compared with a number of multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne which were built in the same period and display similar characteristics. 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*



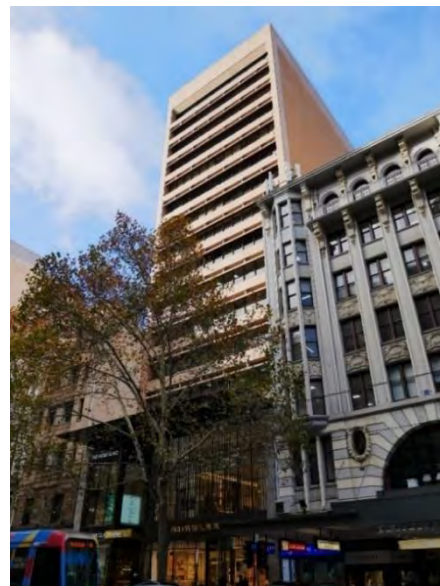
Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



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)

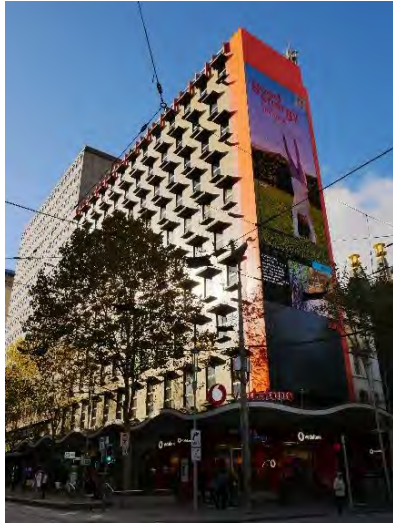


Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



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)



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



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)



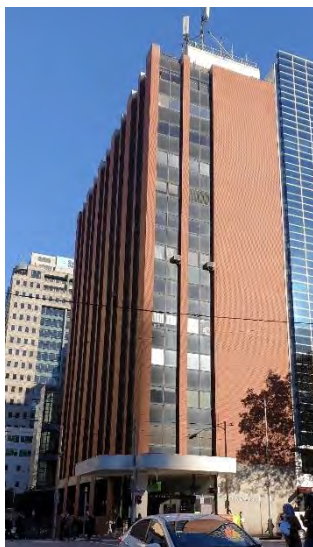
Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



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 Post-War Modernist office building, the AMP Tower at 527-555 Bourke 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 AMP Tower clearly demonstrates this class of place.

The associated low-rise St James Building is an integral part of the overall design of the complex and displays unusual architectural detailing that complements the AMP Tower.

### ***The Public Plaza***

The AMP Tower and St James Building Complex was noted in 1993 as the ‘first project to enclose space with a mix of high and low rise in the CBD’ (Goad, Lewis, Mayne, Raworth & Turnbull ‘Central City Heritage Study Review’ 1993). The creation of large open plazas in association with postwar multi-storey building development was uncommon, although a number of multi-storey building

designs incorporated small plazas, usually to gain council approval for additional building height. These included the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Building, 308-336 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner 1963) as well as later buildings such as the CBC of Sydney Bank, 251-57 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1968-73) and the Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building, 363-71 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1972-75).

One of the first large public plazas associated with a free-standing tower was part of the National Mutual Centre, 435-55 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton & Lobb 1965). It was described in *Building Ideas* March 1965 as follows:

*The creation of a much needed open plaza in the heart of the office district was made possible by the City Council's move in buying the whole block and leasing it back to National Mutual with the requirement that only half the area should be built upon and the other half be paved and planted for the use of the public with parking underneath.*

Similarly the Southern Cross Hotel, 121 Exhibition Street (L M Perrott & Partners 1962) incorporated a public plaza in the design of the building. This was described in the March 1965 edition of *Building Ideas* as 'a desirable innovation in its outdoor plaza, surrounded on all sides by a two-level promenade of shops, with a fountain and seats at ground level'.

Both these buildings have been demolished and the former public plazas consumed by building development.

The form of the public plaza at the AMP Tower and St James Building Complex has been retained as the setting for the two buildings on the site and remains as a rare feature in within the Hoddle Grid. Despite additions made to the buildings, and the removal of the original sculpture, the plaza remains substantially intact to clearly demonstrate the original urban design concept of a bluestone-paved urban plaza in association with city office building development.

**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*

*Architect*: May/June 1969; May/June 1970; March/April 1972.

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*Cross-Section*: No. 125, March 1963; No. 205, 1 December 1969; No. 206, 1 January 1970.

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

National Trust of Australia, Victoria: Victorian Heritage Database records (NTAV: VHD), <<https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/>>, accessed 3 July 2019:

'AMP Square - AMP Tower, St James Building, plaza & Clement Meadmore 'Awakening' Sculpture', 527-555 Bourke Street, Melbourne

'Former St James Buildings', 527-555 Bourke Street, Melbourne.

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

Taylor, Jennifer & Susan Stewart (2001), *Tall buildings : Australian business going up : 1945-1970*, Sydney [NSW].



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**PREVIOUS STUDIES**

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**Central Activities District  
Conservation Study 1985** B

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 1993** A

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

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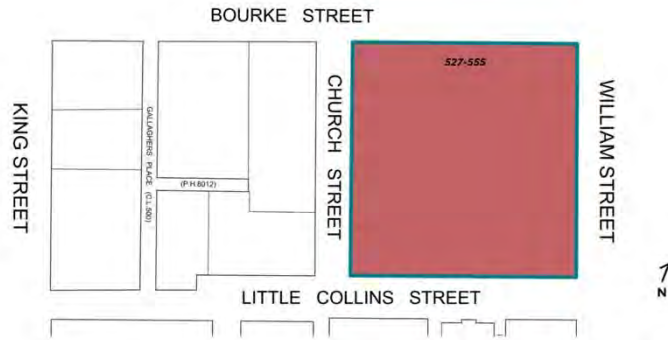
**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011** Ungraded

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### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** AMP Tower and St James Building Complex

**PS ref no:** ~~HOXXXX~~[HO1310](#)





## What is significant?

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AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street, a multi-storey office building and plaza complex constructed in 1965-69.

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

- The original external form, materials and detailing of both buildings
- The high level of integrity to the original design of both buildings
- The form of the public plaza.

Later alterations made to the street level facades of both buildings and the roof-top addition to the St James Building are not significant. The garden beds, ramped walkways and in-built furniture within the plaza are not significant.

## How it is significant?

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The AMP Tower and St James Building Complex at 527-555 Bourke Street is of historical, rarity, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Melbourne.

## Why it is significant?

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[As the third headquarters constructed for the Australian Mutual Provident Society in Melbourne, the AMP Tower and St James Building Complex has a clear association with the history of the life insurance industry in Melbourne. Established in 1849, the Australian Mutual Provident Society pioneered life insurance in Australia and by the 1880s was a well-regarded and highly successful national life insurance provider. The scale and complexity of the design, the quality of the work, and the commissioning of successful American architects to lead the project clearly demonstrates the success and growth of the AMP Society in Melbourne in the twentieth century \(Criterion A\).](#)

Constructed in 1965-69 to a design by Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, the AMP Tower and St James Building Complex 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 AMP Tower and St James Building are fine and intact representative examples of Post-War Modernist commercial buildings. Lead design by American architects Skidmore Owings & Merrill, the buildings strongly reflect the style which was popular in the 1960s to the mid-1970s, particularly in central Melbourne. Constructed as a 26-storey office tower on a prominent corner site, the freestanding AMP Tower clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a 1960s to mid-1970s structure, including four identical grid-like walls formed from dominant vertical piers and repetitive square window and spandrel units, a podium base and deep crowning cornice, and the use of materials such as reconstructed granite-faced precast concrete panels, bronze-tinted glazing and anodised aluminium window frames. Utilising the same materials, the sloping and angled grid-like walls of the low-rise St James Building similarly demonstrate typical characteristics of a grid-like 1960s to mid-1970s structure. Despite alterations and

additions made to the two buildings, the AMP Tower and St James Building clearly demonstrates the [principle-principal](#) characteristics of a postwar multi-storey commercial complex (Criterion D).

The AMP Tower and St James Building Complex is a well-considered and carefully detailed example of a designed urban space in the Melbourne CBD. Widely discussed and illustrated in contemporary architectural journals during and after construction, the site – with prominent corner tower, L-shaped building which encloses the site and associated public plaza – presents as a well-designed and now rare urban space in the CBD. Despite alterations, including the removal of the original Clement Meadmore sculpture 'Awakening' from the plaza, the overall form of the original 1960s urban space can be understood and appreciated (Criterion B & Criterion E).

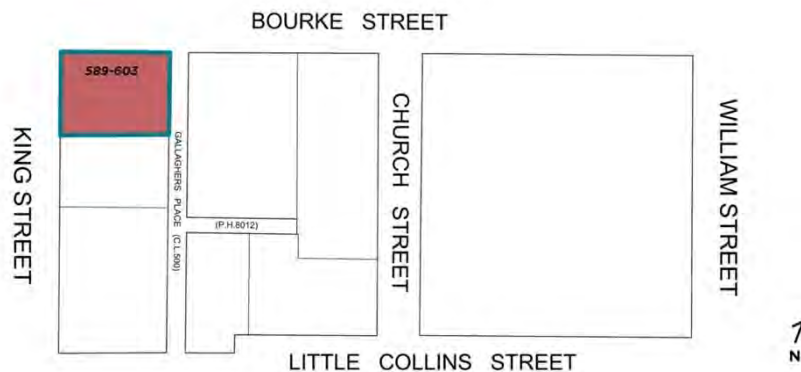
### **Primary source**

[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 Allianz Centre (current name)]
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	589-603 Bourke Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	105390



<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>	Peddle Thorp de Preu	<b>FORMER GRADE</b>	Ungraded
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	<b>BUILDER:</b>	Leighton Properties & The British Land Co. of Aust.
		<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	1973-1975

## THEMES

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

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Office, Hotel
1920s	Merchant, Office or Factory, Hotel
1960s	Workshop, Office, Café/Restaurant

## 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 corner office building at 589-603 Bourke Street was designed by architects and engineers, Peddle Thorp de Preu and constructed by Leighton Properties Pty Ltd with The British Land Co. of Aust. Pty Ltd in 1973-1975.

## CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

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

### Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

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

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

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

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

### **Beyond the curtain wall**

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

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

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

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

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

### **Business and finance in the postwar period**

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



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

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

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

## SITE HISTORY

The corner office building at 589-603 Bourke Street was designed by architects and engineers, Peddle Thorp de Preu (BAP) and constructed by Leighton Properties Pty Ltd with The British Land Co. of Aust. Pty Ltd (SLV, Image H99.50/384).

In February 1973, the City of Melbourne received a building permit application for an '11 storey office building' at 601 Bourke Street (estimated to cost \$2,650,000) (BAI). Construction commenced in April 1973 (SLV, Image H99.50/384).

Annotations to the 1972 drawings by Peddle Thorp de Preu (Figure 1 - Figure 3) indicate that the office building was designed with 'precast exposed scoria sandblasted aggregate units' and aluminium framed, centrally-pivoted, double-glazed windows. The external columns and colonnaded area to the ground floor were to have a 'bush hammered concrete finish' (BAP). Photos dating to 1974 show the construction of the corner building (Figure 4 & Figure 5). A 1975 photo of the newly completed building shows the original ground floor exterior (Figure 6).

In November 1975, 601 Bourke Street was advertised for tenants, the advertisement describing the '10 floors of quality office space' on the prominent corner, with an 'imposing entrance' and basement carpark (Age, 11 Nov 1975:22). The Forests Commission Victoria (later Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands) occupied 601 Bourke Street from c1978 (Age, 11 Feb 1978:105).

In 2019 the building is called the Allianz Centre (ComMaps).

**Peddle Thorp de Preu, architects**

The partnership of Peddle & Thorp was formed in 1914. From 1920 Frederick H E Walker (1900-1950) served his articles at the firm, before completing his studies, working in the United States and travelling. Walker re-joined the firm as partner in 1924, which established the firm Peddle, Thorp & Walker. Frank Thorp (1903-1968; George Thorp's younger brother) became the fourth partner in 1929. George Thorp travelled in 1953 and 1960 to review the latest overseas architectural developments and trends (Goad & Higham 2012:535-6).

From the 1950s, Peddle, Thorp & Walker asserted itself as a major Sydney Post War practice. The firm's design for AMP's Sydney headquarters on Phillip Street (1962) brought them international attention for designing the first skyscraper completed in Sydney (Goad & Higham 2012:535-6; Taylor 2001:58). The curved and glazed curtain wall tower broke the 150 foot (c45.75m) height limit and 'signalled a new era of skyscraper design and a race for height' (Goad & Higham 2012:536). The firm continued designing tall buildings in Sydney, including Sun Alliance House, Bridge Street (1964-65; demolished), Goldfields House, Pitt Street (1966), the Royal Exchange Building, Bridge Street (1967) and the ANZ Bank and Offices, Pitt Street (1972) (Goad & Higham 2012:535-6). In Melbourne, the firm designed Dalgety House at 457-471 Bourke Street (1966-68) and Australia-Netherlands House on Collins Street (c1968-70), both in association with Melbourne-based architects Meldrum & Partners.

The multi-storey office building at 589-603 Bourke Street, Melbourne (1973-75) was designed by the partnership of Peddle Thorp De Preu. Gerard de Preu was a Swiss-born architect who arrived in Sydney in 1949 (Sun 12 October 1950:33). Little is known about his early career in Australia. In the 1970s he partnered with Peddle Thorp before establishing his own practice, Gerard de Preu and Partners in South Yarra, Melbourne in 1980 (*Age*, 13 January 1971:38; Encyclopedia of Australian Science). The firm designed the Rialto Towers at 525 Collins Street (1982-86) in association with Perrott Lyon Mathieson. The Rialto was Australia's tallest building upon its completion in 1986. De Preu also designed the ACI Building, 200 Queen Street (1980s) and was involved in the proposed development of the Jolimont Railyards (*Age*, 24 June 1987:36). De Preu's practice continued to 2006, just three years prior to his death.

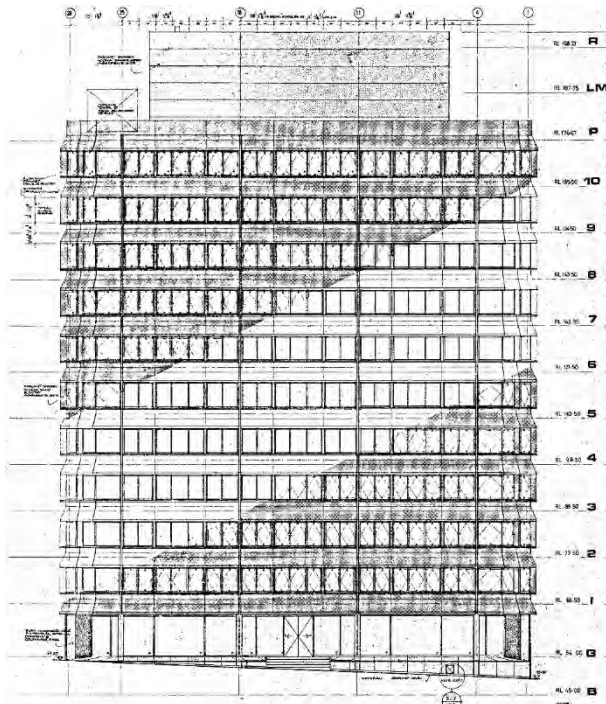


Figure 1. North elevation to Bourke Street. Drawing by Peddle Thorp de Preu, dated November 1972 (BAP).

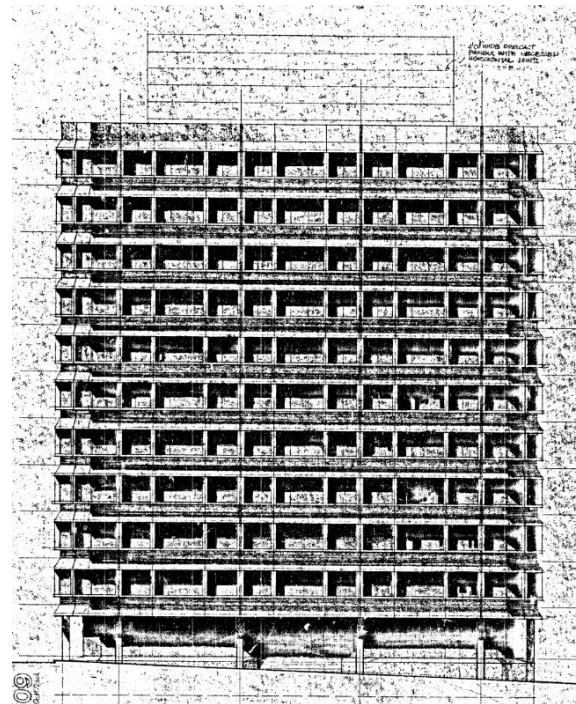


Figure 2. North elevation to Bourke Street. Drawing by Peddle Thorp de Preu, dated October 1972 (BAP).

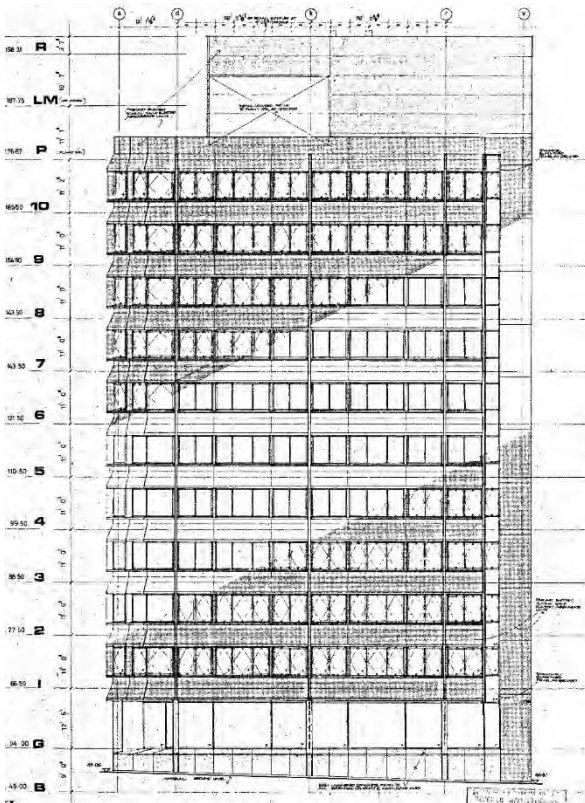


Figure 3. West elevation to King Street. Drawing by Peddle Thorp de Preu, dated November 1972 (BAP).





Figure 4. The corner building under construction in 1974 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/383).



Figure 5. The building under construction in 1974. The site board states that the office development was by Leighton Properties Pty Ltd with The British Land Co. of Aust. Pty Ltd, and that construction started in April 1973 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/384).



Figure 6. The newly completed office building in 1975, with the original exterior to the ground floor (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/385).

## SITE DESCRIPTION

The office building at 589-603 Bourke Street, is a 10-storey (plus ground level) commercial building located on the south-east corner of Bourke Street and King Street. Constructed in 1973-75 to a design by architects Peddle Thorp de Preu, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

The building presents three identical facades to King Street, Bourke Street and Gallaghers Lane to the east. Visible above the adjacent low-scale building in King Street, the south façade is an unadorned wall of painted exposed brickwork infill to the concrete structure.

The building is of reinforced concrete column and slab construction which is clad with deep, highly modelled precast concrete wall panels with exposed, scoria sandblasted aggregate finish. Repeated across the three main facades, these wall panels form both sills and deep sunhoods for rows of façade windows. The vertical elements of these precast concrete units join to form mullions which divide the windows into bays, however the horizontal line clearly dominates the overall composition. Angled precast corner units create continuous horizontal lines which wrap around the three main facades and terminate at vertical bays, with narrow strips of windows, at the south end of the east and west facades. These bays clearly define the junction with the adjoining building and, together with a plain parapet, frame the overall building composition.

At street level, the building has been recently re-clad and re-glazed. Original architectural drawings indicate that a bush hammered concrete finish was to be applied to ground level external columns and surfaces and this is no longer visible. It appears that the access stairs from the footpath to the building entrance in Bourke Street have been retained.

## INTEGRITY

The office building at 589-603 Bourke Street, including the original form and detailing of the exterior of the building above street level, remains highly intact to its original 1973-75 construction. Works at street level have altered the original design at the base of the building.

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

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The office building at 589-603 Bourke Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of a 1960s to mid-1970s multi-storey commercial building design. The building's three grid-like facades of complex three-dimensional precast concrete wall panels, which combine to create a strong horizontal emphasis and incorporate sunhoods to shade windows, can be clearly observed from King Street, Bourke Street and Gallaghers Lane. Despite modifications made to the building at street level, the upper facades of the building remain highly intact to their original design.

There are a number of buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the office building at 589-603 Bourke 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*



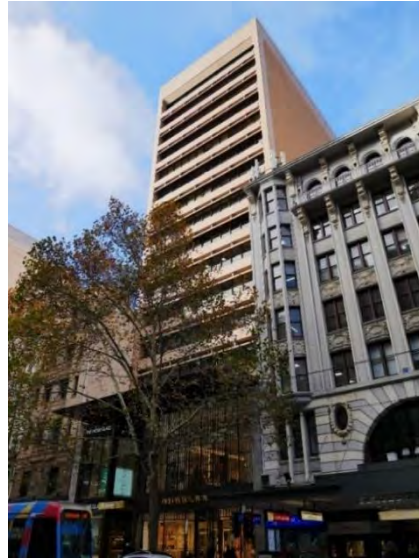
Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



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, 19741-73 included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Flinders Lane) (Non-contributory).

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



Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

#### *Other examples*

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





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



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



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



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



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



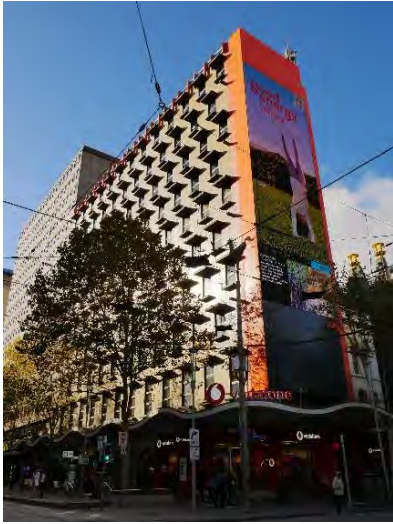
Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building, 155-161 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961-62)



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



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



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



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



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



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





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



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



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



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



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



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





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



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



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



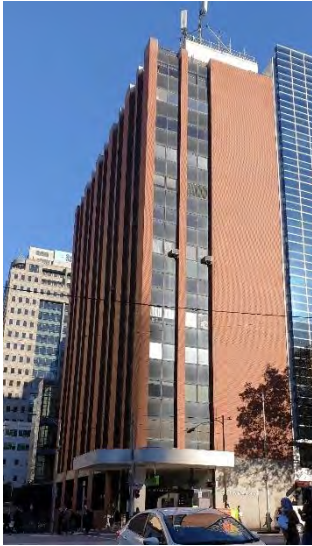
Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



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, 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 office building at 589-603 Bourke 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**

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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

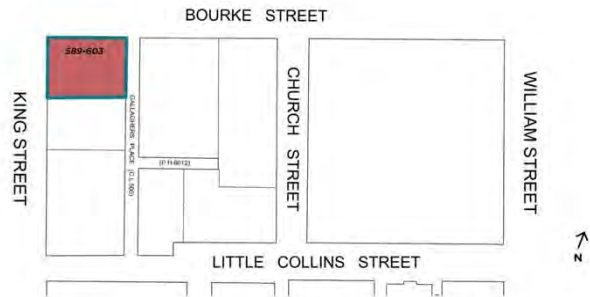
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**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011** Ungraded

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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

## Heritage Place: Office Building

PS ref no: [HOXXXXHO1311](#)

## What is significant?

The office building at 589-603 Bourke Street, a multi-storey commercial building constructed from 1973-75.

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

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

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

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**How it is significant?**

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The office building at 589-603 Bourke Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

**Why it is significant?**

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Constructed from 1973-75 to a design by Peddle Thorp de Preu, the office building at 589-603 Bourke 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 589-603 Bourke Street is a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building. The building strongly reflects the architectural style popular from the 1960s to the mid-1970s, particularly in central Melbourne, and clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a later postwar structure including three grid-like facades of complex three-dimensional wall panels that combine to create a strong horizontal emphasis. The use of materials such as precast concrete and aluminium window frames, as well as the incorporation of sunhoods to shade windows, demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style (Criterion D).

**Primary source**

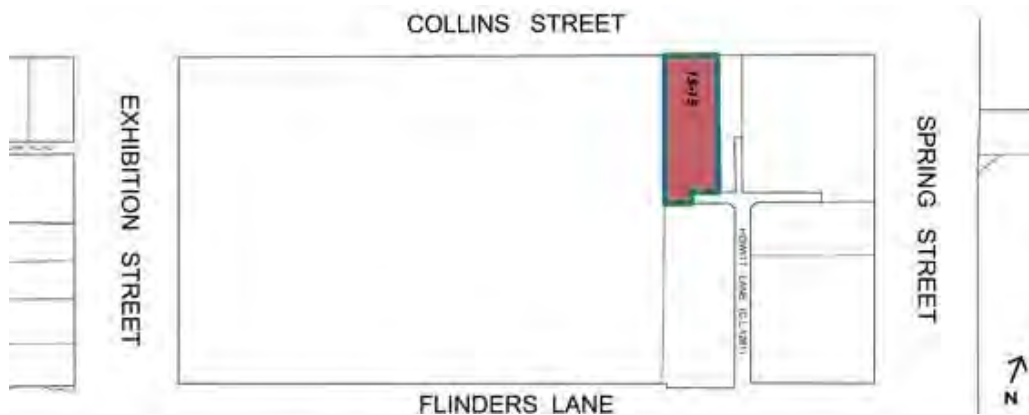
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[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\)](#)~~Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)~~ (updated March 2022)





<b>SITE NAME</b>	Apartment Building
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	13-15 Collins Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	102059



**SURVEY DATE:** November 2017

**SURVEY BY:** Context

**HERITAGE INVENTORY**

N/A

**EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY**

No

**PLACE TYPE**

Individual Heritage Place

**PROPOSED CATEGORY**

Significant

**FORMER CATEGORY**

Significant

**DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:**

Kurt Popper

**BUILDER:**

Not known

**DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:**

Postwar Period (1945-1975)

**DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:**

1970

## 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 1.11 Overseas influences
5 Living in the city centre	5.1 Housing and lodging

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Medical / residential
1920s	Medical / residential
1960s	Carpark/ 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 émigré architect Kurt Popper, this modern residential apartment is an example of a 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 a rhythmic arrangement of brown 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

13-15 Collins Street forms part of Crown Allotment 12, Section 8, originally purchased by Godfrey Howett (CoMMaps). Until 1945, the land was occupied for more than 70 years by the family of Dr Walter Gray. Dr Gray's house with doctors' rooms was one of Melbourne's oldest residential houses at that time (*Argus* 28 September 1945:6). By 1955, the land had been cleared by the then proprietor, the trustees of the Returned Servicemen's League, and used as a car park (*Argus* 18 January 1955:15).

In 1968, plans for a new \$2.25 million apartment building, '13-15 Collins Street', were drawn up by a group of Melbourne business people who had formed a company called No 13-15 Collins Street Pty Ltd (*Age* 17 November 1972:3). The managing agents of the project were Jones, Lang & Wootton (*Age* 15 May 1968:40). By May 1968 the excavations for the foundations of the building were completed, and tenders were invited around the same time (*Age* 15 May 1968:40).

Architects Roy Grounds & Co Pty Ltd were initially appointed to design the building, the first modern apartment tower on Collins Street. The firm, however, did not complete the project. The building was constructed to an amended design by émigré architect Kurt Popper who had completed two of the first modern residential buildings in Melbourne by that time, Crossley House at 47 Little Bourke Street and Park Tower at 201 Spring Street. Although the façade of 13-15 Collins Street was largely redesigned by Popper, the finished building showed some degree of continuity with Grounds' design, including the use of masonry and render, and the dynamic arrangement of asymmetric massing across the height of the façade (Figure 2, Figure 1) (*Age* 19 June 1970:45).

One of the main differences between the designs of the two architects was the provision of the ground-level plaza. In Popper's design, the first two storeys were on the street line while the upper-storey tower was set back from the street line, whereas, in Grounds' design, the whole tower was set at the street line. The height of the building was also reduced from 24 to 22 storeys (*Age* 19 June 1970:45).



Figure 1. Roy Grounds' design for 13-15 Collins. (Source: *Age* 15 May 1968:40)



Figure 2. Kurt Popper's amended design for 13-15 Collins. (Source: *Age* 15 May 1968:40)

Completed in late 1970, 13-15 Collins Street was one of Melbourne's most luxurious blocks of strata title ('own-your-own') residential apartments. The proposed selling prices for each of the 48 flats varied from around \$35,000 for a single-bedroom apartment to \$185,000 for the 3700-square-foot penthouse on the twenty-second floor (*Age* 19 June 1970:45).

Even the single bedroom apartments were planned as 'luxury' residences featuring two bathrooms, dressing and powder rooms, a large kitchen, and balconies with views over the 'Paris end' of the city (*Age* 19 June 1970:45; 2 June 1971:11). Underground car parking and resident caretakers were also included (*Age* 19 June 1970:45).

At their completion, the apartments at 13-15 Collins Street were advertised as attractive 'city residences' offering 'a new exciting concept in modern living' (*Age* 23 September 1970:5). Contrary to initial expectations, however, the units sold slowly, with apartments in the building from the third floor up remaining empty for almost two years between 1970 and 1972 (*Age* 17 November 1972:3).

Unsuccessful sales resulted in changes being made to the building and its operation. Two months after the building's opening, the management of 13-15 Collins Street lodged an application to change the use of its lower-level suites from 'residential' to 'professional', in order to house medical practices (*Age* 19 June 1970:45).

In July 1971, the directors of 13-15 Collins Street sought Melbourne City council's permission to change the use of floors eight to 23 to commercial. The request was refused by the Building and Town Planning Committee because 13-15 Collins Street was built under an arrangement of a 'plot ratio bonus', which allowed eight-foot ceiling heights for residential buildings, instead of the nine-foot minimum requirements for office buildings. Based on this regulation, council advised that management needed to purchase land of 2000 square feet for use as a public park in order for commercial zoning to be approved (*Age* 17 November 1972:3).

In 1972, Hanover Holdings Pty Ltd acquired 13-15 Collins Street and commercial zoning was extended to all of the residential flats in the building (Age 8 August 1973:19). The total cost for the adaptation of residential suites for the accommodation of consulting rooms was about \$410,000, including the payment of a \$300,000 fee to council. Consequently, the market value of the building increased to around \$3 million in mid-1973 (Age 8 August 1973:19).

As a result of the rezoning, the units and penthouse at 13-15 Collins Street were granted two strata titles: residential and professional, which allowed conversion from a residence to an office (Age 9 May 1891:19; 19 August 1978:18). By 1974, businesses and doctors' practices were established in the premises (Age 25 September 1974:8).

Today, 13-15 Collins Street continues to house retail spaces in the lower levels and apartment/office units above the plaza. Today, the building comprises 17 residential properties, 27 businesses, three shops and two food and drink outlets (CoMMaps).

#### *Kurt Popper, architect*

Kurt Popper (1910-2008) was born in 1910 in Vienna, where his father was a successful joinery factory owner. With a keen interest in theatre and stage design, Popper studied at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna, an art and craft school established in 1867 (Edquist:9). Popper was also a visiting student at the Academy of Fine Arts, where he attended the classes of Clemens Holzmeister, one of Vienna's leading architects (Edquist:11).

In March 1938, Popper was forced to leave Austria due to the political crisis in Europe. He first joined his friends in Paris. As soon as he could afford a ticket, he left for England, before travelling to Adelaide in April 1939, guaranteed by the Adelaide Jewish Community (Edquist:11).

In Adelaide, Popper briefly worked for Evans, Bruer & Hall, and completed a few commissions, one of which was featured in *Australian Home Beautiful*. While the war-time building restrictions were in action, he worked as an engineer (Edquist:11-12).

Popper held a position at the Housing Commission of Victoria in the office of Frank Heath in 1945-46. During this time, Popper's first independent commission in Melbourne, the Sherman house (1946) in East Malvern, was featured on the cover of *Australian Home Beautiful*. Following the success of the Sherman house, Popper established his own practice in Jolimont (Edquist:12).

During the 1950s and 1960s, Popper worked for many Jewish clients in St Kilda, Caulfield, Toorak and South Yarra. By the 1960s, he was recognised as one of the most prolific residential architects (Edquist:12).

While his practice ranged from large single-storey houses to own-your-own flats, one of his early achievements was high-rise city apartment blocks. Popper designed three early apartment blocks in Melbourne, including the first postwar era apartment in Crossly Lane. In recognition of his expertise, Popper was invited by the School of Architecture at the University of Melbourne to lecture on the design, construction and viability of high-rise apartments (Edquist:19).

Popper retired in 1975, at the age of 65, after over 35 years in practice (Age 18 June 2014).

## SITE DESCRIPTION

This multistorey residential building has a two-storey base/podium built to the street boundary with a twenty-storey tower set back from the street. The building is distinctively modern in its form and aesthetic and is a representative example of a new building type - the modern residential tower building that proliferated in Melbourne from the late 1960s.

The building is constructed with a concrete structural frame and a curtain wall facing Collins Street. The front façade is divided into a grid pattern determined by the intersection of vertical and horizontal bays, all clad in brown brick. Masonry balconies project forward on each floor at each edge of the building. At regular intervals, the balconies extend over two bays, creating a rhythmic pattern up the façade. The arrangement varies slightly at the top two levels (which are likely to correspond with penthouse apartments) where the masonry balcony spans the entire frontage.

The podium level is divided into two wings with a centrally positioned wide entry way to the apartment tower. Retail spaces are located on the ground level with commercial spaces on the first floor. While the form of the podium is intact, the finishes to the façade have been altered, including the removal of the original tiles. A curved canopy over the tower entry doors is the only remaining feature.

The side walls of the building are clad in brown brick, with the marking of the concrete floor plates evident. The side façade presents as a solid, monumental element of the building, in contrast to the more open and dynamic front façade.

## INTEGRITY

The tower section retains a high level of integrity. The form of the lower level podium remains but alterations have occurred to the finishes, including removal of the original tiles to the façade.

## 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 the apartment building at 13-15 Collins Street. 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)



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 the apartment building at 13-15 Collins Street, all three buildings are of modernist design, 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.



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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>  |
-

**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** Ungraded

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**Central City Heritage  
Study Review 1993** C

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

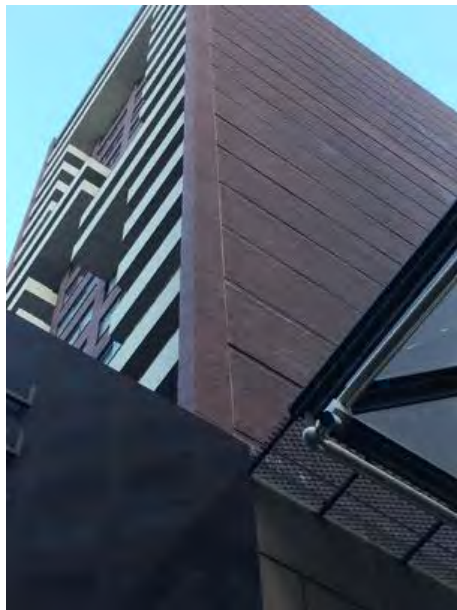
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**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011** Ungraded

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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Apartment Building

PS ref no: [HOXXXXHO1265](#)**What is significant?**

The apartment building at 13-15 Collins Street, Melbourne, built in 1970, and designed 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?

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The apartment building at 13-15 Collins Street, Melbourne is of local historic, representative, aesthetic and associative significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

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The apartment building at 13-15 Collins Street, constructed in 1970, 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. The deliberate promotion of 13-15 Collins Street as a venue for a glamorous modern lifestyle contributes to an understanding of Melbourne as a modern city in the postwar period. (Criterion A)

The apartment building at 13-15 Collins Street demonstrates a new building typology that emerged in the CBD in the late 1960s and early 1970s – the modern high-rise residential apartment building. The apartment building at 13-15 Collins Street demonstrates key characteristics of its type. It was constructed over a podium at the lower level accommodating retail and commercial spaces, with luxury residential apartments located in a recessed tower section. Residential accommodation included modern technologies such as individually controlled heating, cooling systems and security systems, access to communal recreation facilities located at the base of the apartments, basement car parking, and concierge/caretaker services. (Criterion D)

The apartment building at 13-15 Collins Street is of aesthetic significance for its distinctly modernist character expressed in its structure, facade articulation and skilful composition of form and materials. This is achieved by the combination of an expressed concrete grid structural frame, brick cladding and large areas of glazing. The façade is further enlivened by projecting masonry balconies that create a rhythmic pattern by regularly extending over two bays. The top levels of penthouse apartments are distinguished by larger balconies that unify the façade. (Criterion E)

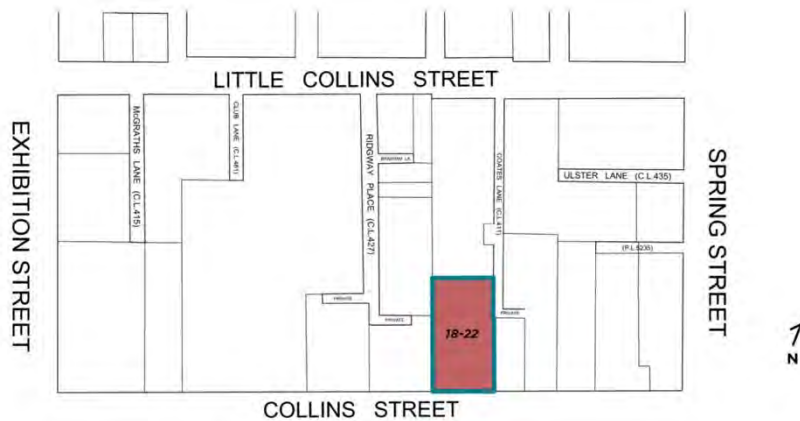
The apartment building at 13-15 Collins Street is significant for its association with émigré architect Kurt Popper who brought European ideas about living in the city to the Melbourne CBD. Popper designed a number of residential apartment buildings in Melbourne including the six-storey 'Crossley House' (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>	Coates Building
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	18-22 Collins Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	102164



<b>SURVEY DATE:</b>	October 2019	<b>SURVEY BY:</b>	GJM Heritage
<b>HERITAGE INVENTORY</b>	No	<b>EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY</b>	HO504
<b>PLACE TYPE</b>	Individual Heritage Place	<b>PROPOSED CATEGORY</b>	Significant
		<b>FORMER CATEGORY</b>	Significant
<b>DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:</b>	John A La Gerche	<b>BUILDER:</b>	G A Winwood Pty Ltd
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	1958-1959

## 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
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Buiness and finance

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Medical
1920s	Medical
1960s	Retail, 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 Coates Building is a curtain wall structure designed by architect John A La Gerche, and built in 1958-59 by builders G A Winwood Pty Ltd. It was constructed for owners Coates Building Pty Ltd, a 'type of co-operative ownership company' which was formed to develop the property. John A La Gerche was one of the directors of Coates Building 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.

### **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 Coates Building is a curtain wall structure designed by architect John A La Gerche, and built in 1958-59 by builders G A Winwood Pty Ltd (Goad et al. 1993; BAP; *Cross-Section*, Oct 1959:2; BAP). It was constructed for owners Coates Building Pty Ltd, a 'type of co-operative ownership company' which was formed to develop the property. John A La Gerche was appointed as one of the directors of Coates Building Pty Ltd in August 1956 (*Age*, 30 Jul 1958:7; 5 Sep 1958:5).

The building was named after Walter Coates (father of A M Coates, a Director of Coates Building Ltd) who purchased the property at the first land sales held in Melbourne in 1840 (Goad et al. 1993). The Coates family retained ownership of the property until the 1950s when it was transferred to Coates Building Pty Ltd (*Argus*, 31 Aug 1956:3). The site was formerly occupied by three bluestone and brick houses which were demolished in May 1956 to facilitate the new development (Goad et al. 1993).

The permit application for the new building – designed to accord with the 40m (132 foot) height limit in place at the time – was received by the City of Melbourne in November 1957 (with an estimated total



cost of £500,000) (BAI). Construction of the building commenced in February 1958 and was completed in 17 months, nearly two months ahead of schedule (Goad et al. 1993).

The Coates Building was developed on a co-operative basis rather than being commissioned. La Gerche had first implemented this method of finance with his earlier development of Gilbert Court at 100-104 Collins Street (1954-55) (Goad et al. 1993; *Cross-Section*, Oct 1959:2; Logan 2012:393). However, contemporary newspapers reported that the Coates Building development was:

*...the first time this method of financing had been used in Australia, the architect and a shareholder (Mr J. A. La Gerche) said yesterday. The company had pioneered the system (Age, 5 Sep 1958:5).*

An article in July 1958 stated that:

*...(the) Coates Building Ltd will make an issue of £450,000 9 per cent registered first-mortgage debentures to the public to help finance a £750,000 "glass house" being built at the top end of Collins Street.*

It continued that the:

*...total cost of £750,000 will be met partly by the debenture issue and the remainder by £300,000 ordinary share capital. Tenants of the building will hold shares in the company. The debenture issue is unusual in that the public will hold debentures secured by a mortgage over the completed building. The £100 debentures have a 9 per cent interest rate and will run for 21 years, maturing in December 1979 (Age 25 Jul 1958:6).*

Shareholders had the right to occupy a certain amount of floor space according to the number of shares they held. If shareholders didn't want to occupy the building, they could lease the space (*Age*, 5 Sep 1958:5). By July 1959, the entire space within the building had been acquired on a shareholding basis (*Age*, 11 Aug 1959:6).

In 1956, La Gerche visited the United States to study the latest trends in multi-storey office construction before the plans were completed (*Argus*, 25 Aug 1956:17; *Cross-Section*, Oct 1956:3). The visit is said to have resulted in his choice of stainless steel to the interior and exterior, which was believed at the time to be the first occasion of its use in Australia (Goad et al. 1993).

The Coates Building was designed as a steel frame building with precast floor units and a sheer glass and aluminum curtain wall to Collins Street (Goad et al. 1993). Architectural drawings dated August 1957 (Figure 1 & Figure 2) indicate that the Collins Street (south) elevation of the building was designed with rigidised stainless steel down the sides of the building, an aluminium cornice above the shopfronts and at the top of the building, and a wrought iron balustrade to the rooftop (BAP).

To the interior, the main entrance lobby was clad in stove enameled rigid stainless steel and a luminous ceiling immediately inside the entrance was made of contoured stainless steel and plexiglass (removed by 1993). Terrazzo flooring was laid inside and outside the building. As many occupants were expected to be members of the medical profession, a mechanical ventilation system was installed to enable full height partitions to be erected. The building comprised central heating via thermostatically controlled electric cables in the floor, windows that could be opened, and seven shops to the ground floor (Goad et al. 1993). In June 1959, newspaper articles advertised for tenants for the Coates Building as it was 'rapidly nearing completion'. These advertisements listed its features

as including sound-proof acoustic ceilings, heat absorbing, anti-glare windows and high-speed elevators as well as noting that an American system of radiant heating was to be used throughout the building (*Age*, 16 Jun 1959:6; 24 Oct 1961:5).

The 'glass box' project was discussed widely in contemporary newspapers and architectural publications, noting that it was 'the second building in Melbourne to have fully glazed and transparent multi-storey commercial curtain wall façade', following La Gerche's earlier design of Gilbert Court at 100-104 Collins Street (1954-55) (Goad et al. 1993). The Coates Building and Gilbert Court were two of the earliest 'glass box' buildings in Australia (Logan 2012:393).

The University of Melbourne publication *Cross-Section* (Oct 1959:2) commented upon the building's completion in 1959, stating that the:

*Coates Building is a younger brother, in several senses, to Gilbert Court, Melbourne's first office building to earn the popular title as Glass House. Both earned the title in a technical sense as well as a popular one, by being remarkable for the absence of the traditionally expected upstanding fire-retarding spandrel between floors. In addition, both were promoted rather than commissioned, both are the only intrusions of this sort of architecture, this end of Collins Street.*

La Gerche's two Collins Street buildings suggested a:

*striking new direction for architectural expression in the central city and demonstrated characteristic cultural affinities with the United States in the same period* (Logan 2012:393).

The Coates Building and Gilbert Court 'epitomised the sought-after total transparency and minimalism of the period where the cladding almost disappeared exposing the unadorned structural frame and the building occupants to honest scrutiny. No other multi-storey offices achieved this in the brief period before air-conditioning forced a modest spandrel to hide the false ceiling and facades began a practical path to less transparency, particularly to the sun's heat' (Goad et al. 1993, cites the National Trust). Both buildings were the only architecture of this type at the east end of Collins Street until 1960 (Goad et al. 1993).

The completed building was occupied by various tenants including medical professionals, architect J A La Gerche, the Australian Geographic Society, magazines, advertising agents, showrooms and a salon (Goad et al. 1993). Air conditioning systems began to be installed in parts of the building from 1968. The ground floor foyer was first refurbished in 1987 (BAI).

### **John Alfred La Gerche, architect**

John Alfred La Gerche is best known for designing two of the earliest 'glass box' buildings in Australia – Gilbert Court (1954-5) and the Coates Building (1958-9), both located on Collins Street in Melbourne's city centre.

La Gerche undertook architectural training at the Melbourne Technical College, followed by the Melbourne University Architectural Atelier. He subsequently took up a position as draftsman with architects, Walter and Richard Butler, followed by five years as Chief Draftsman in the office of Frederick Morsby.

After serving in the Royal Australian Air Force and then the Royal Australian Navy during WWII, La Gerche took up the position of Chief Architect for Ansett Transport Industries. He designed several hotels in this role, including at Hayman Island, Queensland, which was heralded as Australia's first luxury international tourist resort.

In 1951, La Gerche established his own practice, where he focused on hotel remodelling as well as other commercial and industrial work. It was during this time that he designed Gilbert Court and the Coates Building, some of the first 'true curtain-walled office buildings in the city' (Reeves, Dictionary of Unsung Architects).

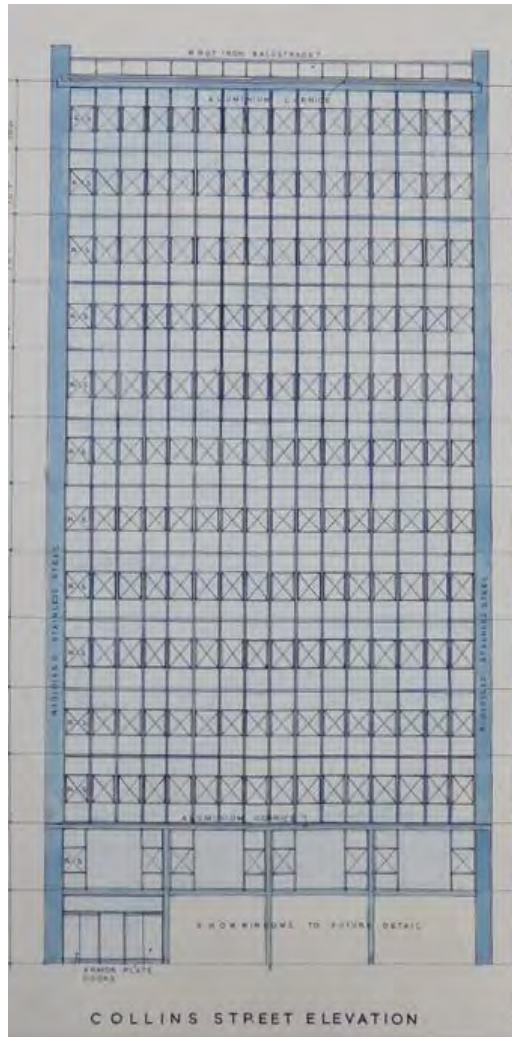


Figure 1. South elevation to Collins Street. Drawing by J A La Gerche, dated August 1957 (BAP).

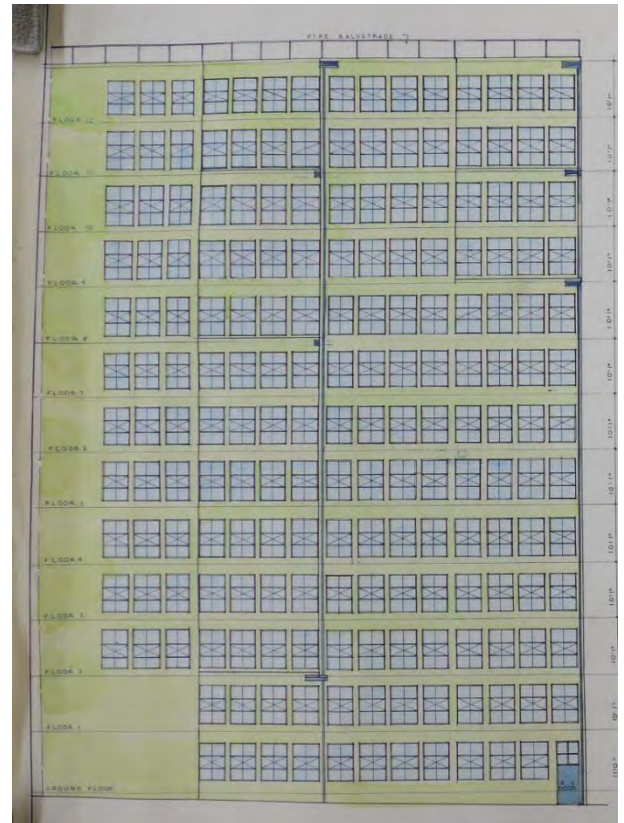


Figure 2. East elevation. Drawing by J A La Gerche, dated August 1957 (BAP).



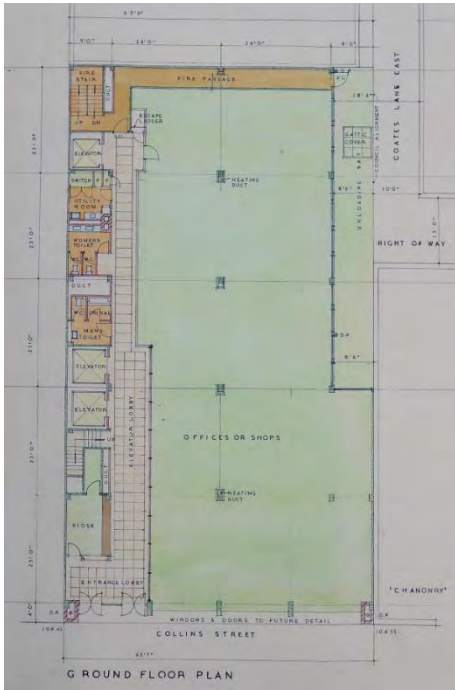


Figure 3. Ground floor plan. Drawing by J A La Gerche, dated June 1957 (BAP).

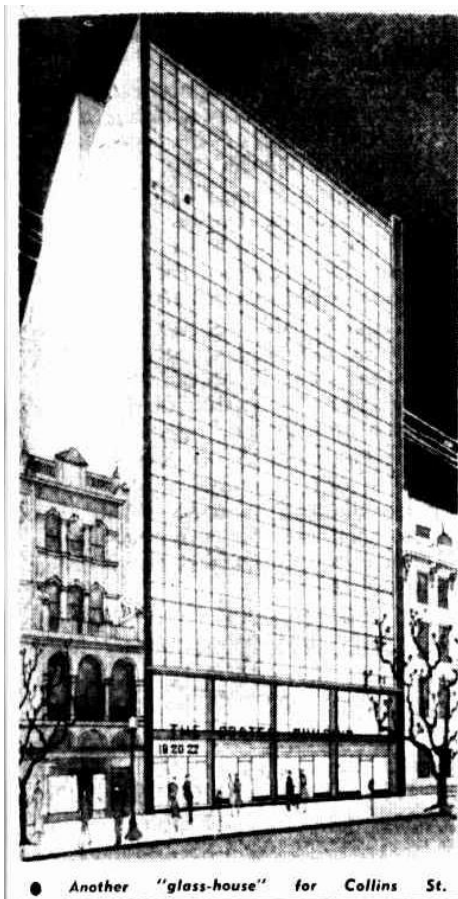


Figure 4. Illustration of the proposed design published in August 1956 (*Argus*, 31 Aug 1956:3).



Figure 5. An illustration of the proposed design, published in July 1958 while the building was under construction (*Age*, 30 Jul 1958:7).



Figure 6. Coates Building in 1960 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/111).

## SITE DESCRIPTION

The Coates Building at 18-22 Collins Street is a 12-storey commercial building located on the north side of Collins Street near the corner of Spring Street. Constructed in 1959 to a design by John A La Gerche, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

Built to the then prevailing height-limit of 40m (132 foot), the Coates Building is rectangular in plan with a narrow frontage to Collins Street and recessed upper bays along the east façade which are visible above the roof of the adjoining building. The adjoining building to the east is of similar height to the Coates Building while a tall building with a frontage to Little Collins Street has been constructed at the rear. Coates Lane East provides access to the east side of the rear of the building from Little Collins Street.

The building is of concrete encased steel column and beam construction with the visible façade to Collins Street presenting as a large transparent curtain wall of light aluminium frame and glass. The façade is entirely glazed, unlike typical curtain walls of the period which incorporated opaque spandrels that obscured the view of the interior of the building and provided a horizontal emphasis to the exterior. Continuous vertical mullions from the street canopy to the parapet above, slender horizontal elements at each internal floor level and light aluminium window transoms inbetween, result in a grid-like pattern across the whole façade. The central row of window sashes were openable (and may remain openable) however a number of air-conditioning units have been inserted in various openings across the façade.

The service core is located at the west side of the building. This facade is obscured by a later adjacent building. The upper levels of the east and rear facades are visible and contain rows of individual metal-framed windows which are set into solid walls. This conservative detailing contrasts with the fully glazed front façade of the building.



A thin projecting aluminium element divides the street level façade from the building above. At ground level in Collins Street, the general form of the shopfronts and west side entrance to the office tower appears to remain. Some re-cladding of the façade has occurred at street level.

## **INTEGRITY**

The Coates Building, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building, remains highly intact to its original construction in 1959.

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 minor alterations (eg re-clad entrance at street level and the insertion of air conditioning units into the principal facade), 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 Coates Building at 18-22 Collins Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of a 1950s multi-storey office building design. The building's curtain wall façade, with rows of metal-framed glazing and vertical mullions which divide the entire facade into a grid-like pattern, can be clearly observed from Collins Street. Unlike the more common curtain wall of the 1950s, which alternated opaque spandrels with rows of glazing, the entire front façade of the Coates Building is glazed and transparent. Despite the redesign of the façade at street level, the upper facades of the Coates Building remain highly intact to their original design.

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

### **State-significant places**

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

### **Locally-significant places**

#### *Precinct Heritage Overlay*

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



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



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



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



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

### *Other Examples*

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



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



Former Atlas Assurance Building, 404-406 Collins Street (H Garnet Alsop & Partners, 1958-61) (Interim HO1008).



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



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





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



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



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



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



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

**Analysis**

As a fine and highly representative example of its type, the Coates Building at 18-22 Collins Street clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey office buildings in the City of Melbourne. Similar to the small number of 1950s buildings presently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme – and a small number of other examples identified throughout the Hoddle Grid and listed above – the Coates 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).

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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 43.01-4)	No
INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

**OTHER**

N/A

## REFERENCES

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*Cross-Section*: No. 48, October 1956; No. 67, May 1958; No. 84, October 1959.

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*The Age*.

*The Argus*.

**PREVIOUS STUDIES**

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**Central Activities District  
Conservation Study 1985** C

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 1993** A

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

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011** Ungraded

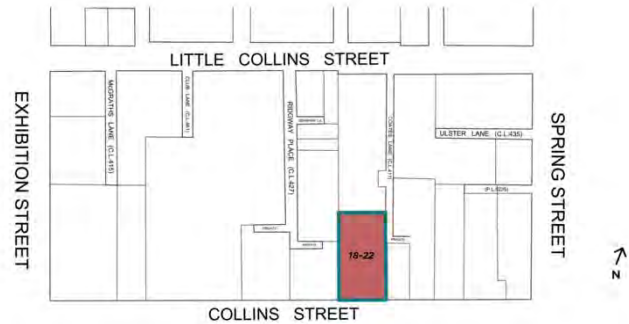
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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

## Heritage Place: Coates Building



PS ref no: HO1312XXXX



## What is significant?

The Coates Building, 18-22 Collins Street, a multi-storey office building constructed in 1958-59.

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.

Later alterations made to the street level facade are not significant. Airconditioning units are not significant.

## How it is significant?



The Coates Building at 18-22 Collins Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

### **Why it is significant?**

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Constructed in 1958-59, to a design by John A La Gerche, the Coates Building has a clear association with the postwar building boom which transformed central Melbourne into a modern high-rise city. The design of these commercial buildings from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s – many of which were architect designed – was driven by the commercial demands and the prestige afforded by a dominant city presence (Criterion A).

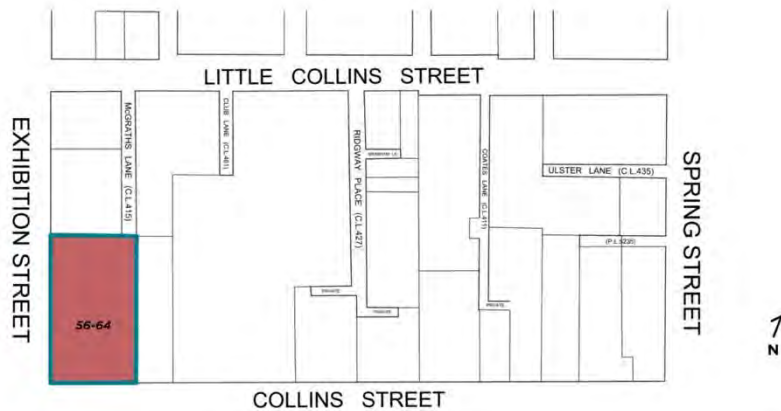
The Coates Building is a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building. The building strongly reflects the style which was popular in the 1950s, particularly in central Melbourne. Constructed to the prevailing 40m (132 foot) height limit of the time, the Coates Building clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a 1950s structure with a curtain wall street façade. The front façade of horizontal rows of framed glazing and vertical mullions which divide the facade into a grid-like pattern, and the use of materials such as aluminium window frames, demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style. The fully glazed and transparent front façade is both unusual and distinctive in the Melbourne context (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>	Former Reserve Bank of Australia <a href="#">(Not included in a Heritage Overlay – see Addendum in Volume 1)</a>
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	56-64 Collins Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	102164



<b>SURVEY DATE:</b> October 2019		<b>SURVEY BY:</b> GJM Heritage	
<b>HERITAGE INVENTORY</b>	No	<b>EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY</b>	HO504
<b>PLACE TYPE</b>	Individual Heritage Place	<b>PROPOSED CATEGORY</b>	Significant
		<b>FORMER CATEGORY</b>	Contributory
<b>DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:</b>	Prof. Brian Lewis, C. McGrouther, C. D. Osborne, R. M. Ure, and F. C. Crocker	<b>BUILDER:</b>	Watts Constructions & Civil and Civic
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	1964-1966

## 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
2 Governing, administering and policing the city	2.1 Commonwealth government
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Business and finance

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Medical
1920s	Medical/Hotel
1960s	Retail/Service, Medical, Café/Restaurant, Car Park, 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 tower on the north-east corner of Collins and Exhibition streets was constructed in 1964-1966 to serve as the Melbourne branch of the Reserve Bank of Australia. The building was designed by a planning panel that comprised Professor Brian B Lewis (Dean of the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Melbourne, appointed as the consulting architect), C McGrouther (Superintendent Premises Section, Establishment Department of the Reserve Bank), C D Osborne (Director of Architecture of the Department of Works), R M Ure (Chief Designing Architect of the Department of Works, Melbourne), and F C Crocker (Architect in Charge, Bank and Special Projects Section of the Department of Works, Sydney).

## 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).

### **Governing, administering and policing the city**

Public administration related to the government provision of services to Australian cities and states has always been based in capital cities. Government departments increased steadily from the late nineteenth century and continued to be of major importance after World War II (Marsden 2000:82). Architect Miles Lewis argues that public works buildings before 1945 comprised 'restrained and sober metropolitan architecture', whereas after the war, government institutions sought to construct buildings that embodied images of modernity and progress. E F Borrie's 1954 plan for Melbourne, for



example, proposed a new layout of major public buildings around Parliament House (Lewis et al 1993:221).

In the postwar period, the number of government offices increased dramatically in city centres due to two phenomena: an expansion in Commonwealth revenue and powers, and the extension of state government responsibilities to include welfare, housing, education, culture, and public transport services (Marsden 2000:83).

In 1948, the Commonwealth Government compulsorily acquired land on either side of Little Lonsdale Street, between Spring and Exhibition streets. The Commonwealth Centre (now demolished) was subsequently constructed on this block of land (with a street address of 11-39 La Trobe Street) over the period 1958 to the early 1960s. Its construction transformed 'the image of the Federal government in central Melbourne into that of a modern corporation' (Lewis et al 1993:223-24, 255).

As Commonwealth powers increased after World War II, Commonwealth buildings in city centres rose in number. Of particular influence was the transfer in 1942 of income tax revenue from the states to the Commonwealth and the resultant construction of buildings for the Taxation Office, including a building in Bourke Street, which opened in 1958. Marsden writes that the Commonwealth government presence, including the establishment after the war of the new Department of Housing and Construction, reinforced Melbourne's continuing pre-eminence as Australia's financial centre, at least until the 1960s.

A telephone exchange and postal hall building was constructed by the Commonwealth government at 114-120 Russell Street in the period 1948-54. In 1956 the building served as a relay station for the broadcasting of newly arrived television. In 1959, the Commonwealth Arbitration Courts opened at 450 Little Bourke Street, and in 1965 the Reserve Bank of Australia opened at 56-64 Collins Street. A telephone exchange was also constructed by the Commonwealth Department of Works at 376-382 Flinders Lane and opened in 1957.

### **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 tower on the north-east corner of Collins and Exhibition streets was constructed in 1964-1966 to serve as the Melbourne branch of the Reserve Bank of Australia (PCA, 1989:3-4; RAlA). Prior to this date, the site was occupied by a hotel and three-storey residential buildings fronting Collins Street, dating to the Victorian period.

The Melbourne Reserve Bank of Australia building was designed by a planning panel that comprised: Professor Brian B Lewis, Dean of the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Melbourne, who was appointed as the consulting architect; C McGrouther, Superintendent Premises Section, Establishment Department of the Reserve Bank; C D Osborne, Director of Architecture of the Department of Works; R M Ure, Chief Designing Architect of the Department of Works, Melbourne; and F C Crocker, Architect in Charge, Bank and Special Projects Section of the Department of Works, Sydney (SLV, Lewis Papers).

The Department of Works compiled a set of preliminary exploratory designs (Figures 1-4) that were designed for the site within the restricted statutory building height of 132 feet (40m), however during the design process this restriction was replaced by regulations that enabled an increased building height at the site. At the first meeting of the planning panel in February 1960, it was agreed that a fifth design – a 17-storey tower block (plus five basement levels) – was to be further developed (following approval by the Bank) for consideration of the panel (Figures 5-6). The panel agreed that ‘in considering the alternatives, the aesthetic advantages of greater height for the tower block are considered important’, noting that the ‘prestige value of the Reserve Bank will compete with adjacent high rise construction at the Consolidated Zinc Building in Collins Street and future high rise structures in the immediate vicinity’ (SLV, Lewis Papers).

An illustration of the proposed Melbourne branch of the Reserve Bank of Australia was published in the *Canberra Times* in February 1964 (7 Feb 1964:22) (Figure 7). The article reported that the new building project for Collins Street was to cost £2,829,750, ‘contain 20 storeys, 17 of them above ground, and will be 242 ft. high’. The article noted that the building was ‘designed and planned by the Commonwealth Department of Works together with Professor B. B. Lewis ... of Melbourne University and representatives of the bank’. It noted that the ground floor was to comprise a covered arcade and entrances off each main street, a ‘shooting gallery for the training of bank officers’, a staff cafeteria, auditorium and amenities. The building was to be constructed of structural steel encased in concrete, aluminium framed windows with small decorative aluminium panel above each window (*Canberra Times*, 7 Feb 1964:22). A vertical emphasis would be created with white marble clad columns to the exterior, and spandrels of black granite (PCA 1989:3)

Planning panel meeting minutes confirm that the ground floor was designed as the public entrance lobby with the first and second floors designed to accommodate the banking chamber and bonds and stocks chamber (SLV, Lewis Papers), which were reflected on the exterior by increased floor heights. Models of the design are shown at Figures 8-10. These models omit the rooftop apartment. The three basement levels were constructed by 1964 by Watts Constructions and the tower was completed in 1966 by Civil and Civic (Figures 11-12) (PCA, 1989:3).

In 1965, eminent Australian artist Sir Sydney Nolan, in collaboration with two technical artists Robin Banks and Patrick Furse, completed the mural entitled *Eureka Stockade* to be installed within the foyer of the Reserve Bank, Melbourne (Figure 13). The mural was commissioned by Dr H C Coombs, Governor of the Reserve Bank, who suggested that Nolan consider a theme related to an Australian legend (VHD, Nolan Eureka Mural). In accepting the commission, Nolan replied to Dr Coombs that he hoped he could do 'something worthy of... the spirit you bring to all these projects' (Nolan, RBAM). The mural depicts the Eureka Stockade, the uprising of goldminers against the colonial authorities. It measured 20 metres in length and 3.6 metres in height, comprising 66 panels executed in jewellery enamel on heavy gauge copper. In 2018 the mural was removed from the site and relocated to the Australian National University in Canberra.

A 1989 Commonwealth Government report indicates that works were undertaken that comprised refurbishment of the above ground interiors, upgrades for compliance with current building standards and enlargement and remodelling of the ground floor foyer to create a 'modern appearance', particularly to appeal to prospective private tenants (PCA 1989:1, 4). City of Melbourne records indicate that the works were carried out in 1993 (CoMMaps). As part of the works, the perimeter walls of the foyer were realigned to the street boundaries and the ground level facades to Exhibition and Collins streets reconstructed in dark grey granite panelling (PCA 1989:7).



Figure 1. Preliminary exploratory design 'A' (Preliminary design 'A'; SLV, Lewis Papers).



Figure 2. Preliminary exploratory design 'D' (Preliminary design 'D'; SLV, Lewis Papers).

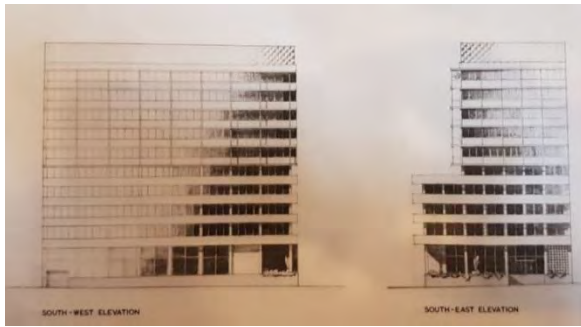


Figure 3. Preliminary exploratory design 'B' (Preliminary design 'B'; SLV, Lewis Papers).

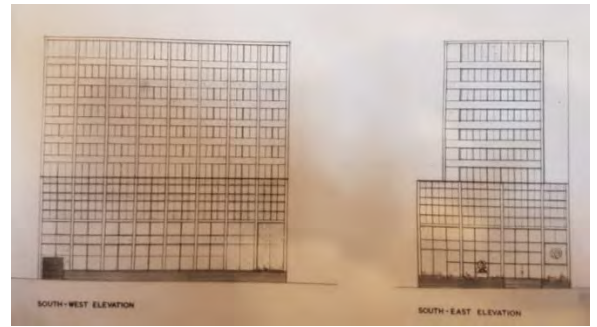


Figure 4. Preliminary exploratory design 'C' (Preliminary design 'C'; SLV, Lewis Papers).



Figure 5. Preliminary study of design 5 (or design 'E') – the first design iteration of a multi-storey tower for the Reserve Bank at the subject site (SLV, Lewis Papers).



Figure 6. A preliminary render of the ground floor as viewed from Collins Street (Preliminary Study 5A; SLV, Lewis Papers).

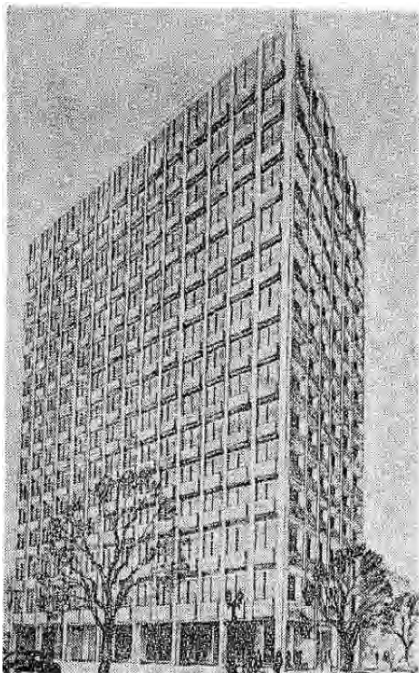


Figure 7. An illustration of the proposed 'new Reserve Bank of Australia building', published in the *Canberra Times* in February 1964.





Figure 8. Model of the south and west elevations. Image dated 1957-1984; probably dates to c1964 (NAA, item B6295, 579/31).



Figure 9. Model of the north and west elevations. Image dated 1957-1984; probably dates to c1964 (NAA, item B6295, 579/32).



Figure 10. Model of the south and west elevations from ground level. Image dated 1957-1984; probably dates to c1964 (NAA, item B6295, 579/33).





Figure 11. The newly completed building in 1966, showing the rooftop butterfly-roof apartment (NAA, item A1200, L57100).



Figure 12. Photo of the subject site dating to 1969 (NAA, item A1200\_L79699).

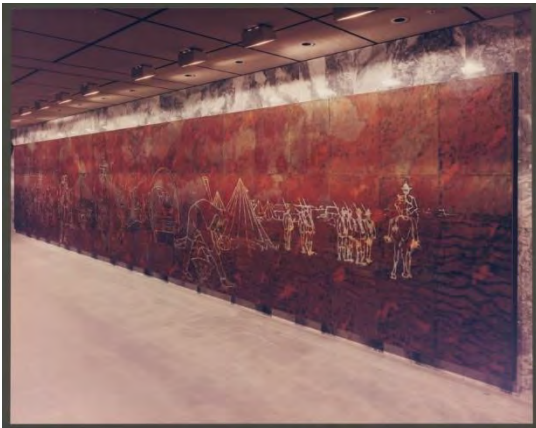


Figure 13. The Sydney Nolan mural in the foyer of the Reserve Bank in 1962 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H2000.195/45).

## SITE DESCRIPTION

The Former Reserve Bank of Australia building at 56-64 Collins Street is a 16-storey commercial building, with three-level basement and roof top caretaker's flat, located at the north-east corner of Collins and Exhibition streets. Constructed in 1964-66 to a design by the Commonwealth Department of Works and a Panel of expert architects, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

The building is of concrete encased steel column and beam construction, with alternating horizontal strips of paired aluminium framed windows and black granite spandrel panels, set between white marble-clad columns. These materials form a highly regular geometric grid across the main facades of the building. The extended upper level of the tower contains plant and building services and is externally clad by louvres set between the columns.

At roof level the caretaker's flat is set back from the edge of the main form of the building and has a distinctive butterfly roof which is clearly visible from the north in Exhibition Street. The tower occupies the western part of the site with vehicle access to the basement car parking and bullion vaults accessed to the east off Collins Street.

The ground floor foyer of the Reserve Bank was redesigned in the 1990s with the perimeter walls brought into alignment with the walls above. Remaining internal columns indicate the original wall placement. At this time the new external ground level facades were constructed in dark grey granite panelling and the internal foyer walls and floors were finished in panels of marble and granite. The foyer contains an open café at the south-west corner, an arched entrance with revolving door at the Collins Street entrance, an arched entrance from Exhibition Street with adjacent concierge desk and lift lobby at the north end.

## **INTEGRITY**

The Former Reserve Bank of Australia 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 1964-66. The original design at street level provided both space and shelter for pedestrian traffic by setting walls back from the building line behind rows of columns. Works in the 1990s has altered this original design.

Overall, the Former Reserve Bank of Australia 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 Reserve Bank of Australia Building at 56-64 Collins Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of 1960s multi-storey commercial building design. Situated on the corner of Collins and Exhibition streets, the building's grid-like curtain wall of horizontal aluminium framed glazing and black granite spandrels and vertical white marble-clad columns can be clearly observed from a number of viewpoints. Despite the redesign of street-level facades, the upper facades of the building remain highly intact to their original design.

There are a number of buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the Reserve Bank of Australia 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 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).



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.

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)

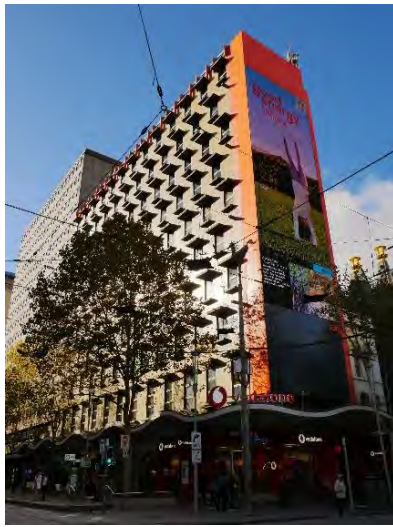


Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



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)



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 office building, the Former Reserve Bank of Australia building at 56-64 Collins Street clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey commercial buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne. Similar to 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 Reserve Bank of Australia building clearly demonstrates this class of place.

**ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA**

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



**RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

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

**MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME**

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

**OTHER**

N/A

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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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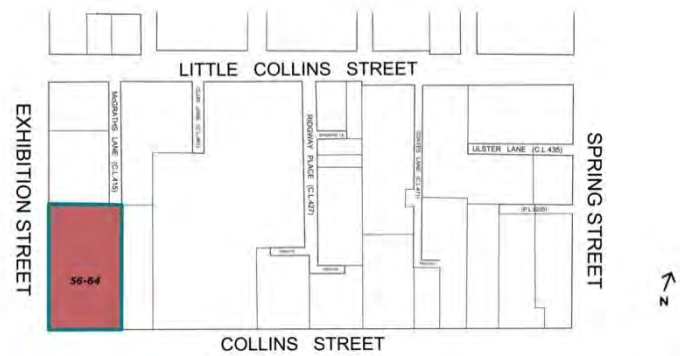
**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011** Ungraded

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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Former Reserve  
Bank of Australia

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



### What is significant?

The Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street, a multi-storey office building constructed in 1964-66.

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?**

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The Former Reserve Bank of Australia at 56-64 Collins Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

**Why it is significant?**

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Constructed in 1964-66 to a design with input from Prof. Brian Lewis, C. McGrouther, C. D. Osborne, R. M. Ure, and F. C. Crocker, the Former Reserve Bank of Australia 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 Reserve Bank of Australia is a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist office building. The building strongly reflects the style which was popular in the postwar period, particularly in central Melbourne. Constructed as a dominant 16-storey building on a corner site, the Former Reserve Bank of Australia building clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a postwar curtain-wall structure. The cuboid form, with facades displaying a regular grid composed of horizontal bands of glazing with dark spandrels and contrasting vertical columns, as well as the variety of materials, including granite and marble cladding and aluminium window frames, demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style (Criterion D).

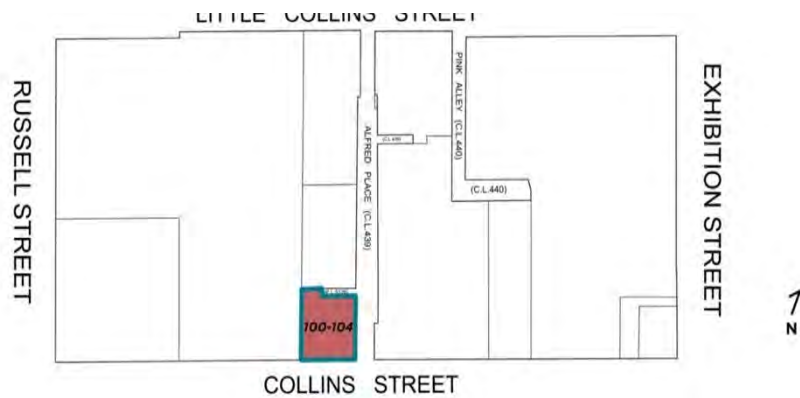
**Primary source**

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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 Gilbert Court
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	100-104 Collins Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	102156



<b>SURVEY DATE:</b>	October 2019	<b>SURVEY BY:</b>	GJM Heritage
<b>HERITAGE INVENTORY</b>	No	<b>EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY</b>	HO504
<b>PLACE TYPE</b>	Individual Heritage Place	<b>PROPOSED CATEGORY</b>	Significant
<b>DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:</b>	John A La Gerche	<b>FORMER CATEGORY</b>	Significant
		<b>BUILDER:</b>	E A Watts Pty Ltd
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	1954-1955

## 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
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Buiness and finance

## LAND USE

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

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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

**Extent of overlay:** To extent of property boundary

## SUMMARY

Gilbert Court is a curtain wall structure designed by architect John A La Gerche and built in 1954-55 by builders E A Watts Pty Ltd. It was developed by Gilbert Court Pty Ltd and owned on a co-operative share basis by tenants. It was noted as Melbourne's first office building to earn the popular title as 'Glass House'.

## CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

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

### Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

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

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

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

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

### **Business and finance in the postwar period**

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

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

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

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

### **SITE HISTORY**

Gilbert Court is a curtain wall structure designed by architect John A La Gerche, and built in 1954-55 by builders E A Watts Pty Ltd. It was developed by Gilbert Court Pty Ltd and owned on a co-operative share basis by tenants (Logan 2012:393; *Argus*, 11 Mar 1954:1; *Age*, 27 May 1955:19).

Gilbert Court was one of the first speculative office buildings constructed in the post-World War II period. Rather than wait for commissions, La Gerche assessed the increasing demand for office space in Melbourne's central business district and took on the role of developer for Gilbert Court (Logan 2012:393; *Cross-Section*, Oct 1959:2). In 1953, *The Herald* stated that the development was 'the first co-operative office enterprise launched in Melbourne,' and that this method of financing new office buildings was popular in the United States (*Herald*, 18 Sep 1953:10). La Gerche later used this finance method on his development of the Coates Building at 18-22 Collins Street (1958-59). The company, Gilbert Court Pty Ltd, was registered in October 1953, before purchasing 100 Collins Street (*Age*, 17 Oct 1953:6).

The building was named in honour of Gilbert Walsh, who had purchased the property in 1950 with the intention of building a 12-storey building. However, Walsh died in December 1951 and his wife subsequently sold the land with the condition that the building would be named after her husband. Mrs Peggy Walsh was appointed chairman of the directors for Gilbert Court Pty Ltd and owned the ground floor shops, one of which she occupied for her millinery business (*Argus*, 21 Jul 1955:11).

The City of Melbourne received a building permit application for the new building in March 1954 (estimated total cost of £212,400) (BAI) and work commenced on the project the same month (*Argus*, 11 Mar 1954:1). The development attracted much attention and was reported on widely in contemporary newspapers and architectural journals. Gilbert Court was to be 'Melbourne's most ultra and up-to-date building' (*Age*, 27 Oct 1953:11) and 'the first in Australia to have a full glass construction on both frontages' (*Age*, 20 Feb 1954:3). In September 1953, *The Herald* (18 Sep 1953:10) reported that the 'limit-height blue glass and aluminium building', also described as a 'glass block,' was to occupy 'one of the most commanding and exclusive sites in any Australian capital.' The University of Melbourne's publication *Cross-Section* noted in April 1954 that Gilbert Court 'indicates heavily the New York influence: a box of glass here doing its best to ignore the regulation set-backs which once were affected as a "sky-scraper" silhouette'. Newspapers suggested that the design of the 'Glass House' was influenced by the United Nations Headquarters in New York (*Argus*, 11 Mar 1954:1; 21 Jul 1955:11). A few years after completion in May 1958, *Cross-Section* reported that Gilbert Court had 'firmly attached to its reputation the title "Melb's first glass box"' (*Cross-Section*, May 1958:2).

Gilbert Court was designed with thirteen floors, a reinforced concrete frame, full transparent curtain walls to the streets and sheer walls on the other elevations, with the service core backing on one of these (Taylor & Stewart 2001:31). Taylor & Stewart state that, like the Coates Building, Gilbert Court was 'distinguished by the absence of the traditional upstanding fire-retarding spandrels between floors' that were no longer required under the fire codes due to advances in alternative systems (Taylor & Stewart 2001:31, 36).

The site lent itself to the design, receiving natural light on three sides, with no light courts needed. A 1953 article reported that the building was to be constructed of reinforced concrete and faced with pale blue wired glass from pavement to roof on both the Collins Street and Alfred Place facades. There was to be a vitreous-enamel-covered pier on the corner and a blank wall on the west side. The glass walls were to comprise more than 1,000 windows set in anodised aluminium frames without any visible columns or masonry, giving the effect of an enormous glass screen. The concrete floor slabs were to be cantilevered three feet beyond the structural frame (*Herald*, 18 Sep 1953:10). Partial air-conditioning was installed, but hopper windows were also used to ensure adequate ventilation (Taylor & Stewart 2001:31).

The Equitable Probate and General Life Insurance Co. occupied the building in 1957, erecting a large sign on the rooftop (Figures 5 and 6).

Four years after completion of Gilbert Court, *Cross-Section* (Oct 1959:2) stated that Gilbert Court was 'Melbourne's first office building to earn the popular title as Glass House', and that the second was La Gerche's Coates Building built in 1958-59:

*Both earned the title in a technical sense as well as a popular one, by being remarkable for the absence of the traditionally expected upstanding fire-retarding spandrel between floors. In addition, both were promoted rather than*



*commissioned, both are the only intrusions of this sort of architecture, this end of Collins Street (Cross-Section, Oct 1959:2).*

Architectural historian Miles Lewis states that Gilbert Court was the first generally recognised postwar example of a city curtain wall (as it was finished before the Alliance Assurance Co building at 408-410 Collins Street, which was completed in 1957). Lewis notes that Gilbert Court's curtain wall 'is a facade wall, but it covers the entire facade rather than being framed or limited in the manner of Leonard House [44-6 Elizabeth Street; 1923-24] and the Barnett Building [164 Bourke Street; 1937-8]. It is clad in aluminium with heat-resisting glass, which in technical terms was not especially novel even for Victoria, but it suggests the aesthetic of the United Nations Building' (Lewis 2015:8.10.11).

Taylor (2001:31) claims that Gilbert Court was the first multi-storeyed building to embody the principles of Modernism. Both buildings were the only architecture of this type at the east end of Collins Street until 1960 (Goad et al. 1993).

Recent commentary on Gilbert Court states:

*The building predated Bates Smart & McCutcheon's ICI House, and like ICI House, it eschewed traditional architectural language, employing the glass curtain wall that had become synonymous with the corporate skyscraper in the United States in the post-war decades. La Gerche's Collins Street buildings [Gilbert Court and Coates Building] suggested a striking new direction for architectural expression in the central city and demonstrated characteristic cultural affinities with the United States in the same period (Logan 2012:393).*

La Gerche's Coates Building and Gilbert Court

*... epitomised the sought-after total transparency and minimalism of the period where the cladding almost disappeared exposing the unadorned structural frame and the building occupants to honest scrutiny. No other multi-storey offices achieved this in the brief period before air-conditioning forced a modest spandrel to hide the false ceiling and facades began a practical path to less transparency, particularly to the sun's heat (Goad et al. 1993, cites the National Trust).*

Alterations and renovations to Gilbert Court in the 1980s included the removal of air conditioning units to the windows within the curtain walls on the south and east elevations, and replacement with glazing (BAP).

### **John Alfred La Gerche (1907-c1972), architect**

John Alfred La Gerche is best known for designing two of the earliest 'glass box' buildings in Australia – Gilbert Court (1954-55) and the Coates Building (1958-59), both located on Collins Street in Melbourne's city centre.

La Gerche undertook architectural training at the Melbourne Technical College, followed by the Melbourne University Architectural Atelier. He subsequently took up a position as draftsman with architects, Walter and Richard Butler, followed by five years as Chief Draftsman in the office of Frederick Morsby.

After serving in the Royal Australian Air Force and then the Royal Australian Navy during WWII, La Gerche took up the position of Chief Architect for Ansett Transport Industries. He designed several

hotels in this role, including at Hayman Island, Queensland, which was heralded as Australia's first luxury international tourist resort.

In 1951, La Gerche established his own practice, where he focused on hotel remodelling as well as other commercial and industrial work. It was during this time that he designed Gilbert Court and the Coates Building, some of the first 'true curtain-walled office buildings in the city' (Reeves, Dictionary of Unsung Architects).

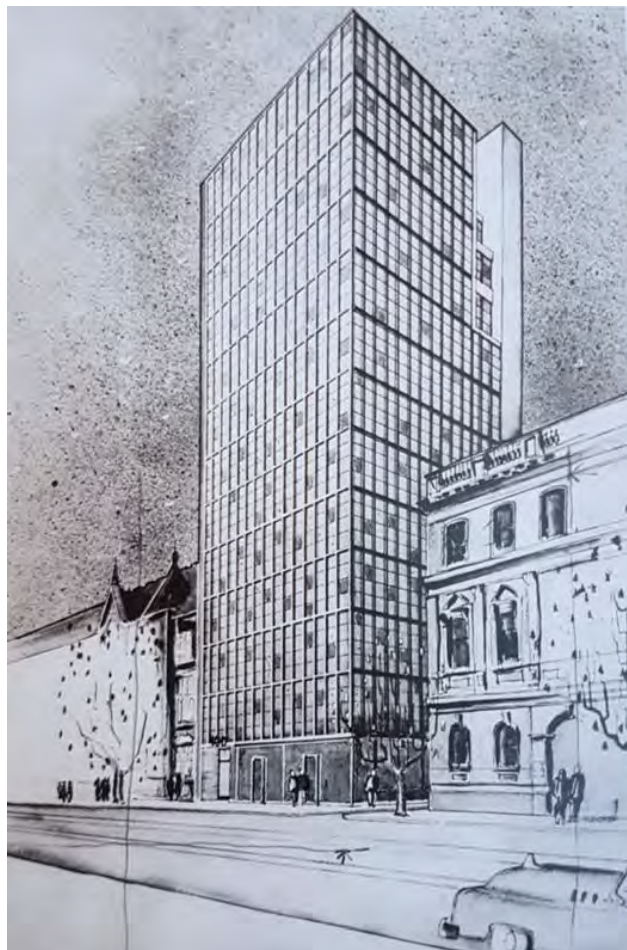


Figure 1. Drawing of the Gilbert Court project by J A La Gerche. No date (Logan 2012:394). Part of this drawing was published in *Cross-Section* in April 1954.



Figure 2. Construction of Gilbert Court, photo dated 28 February 1955 (SLV, Lyle Fowler, photographer, Image H92.20/5270).

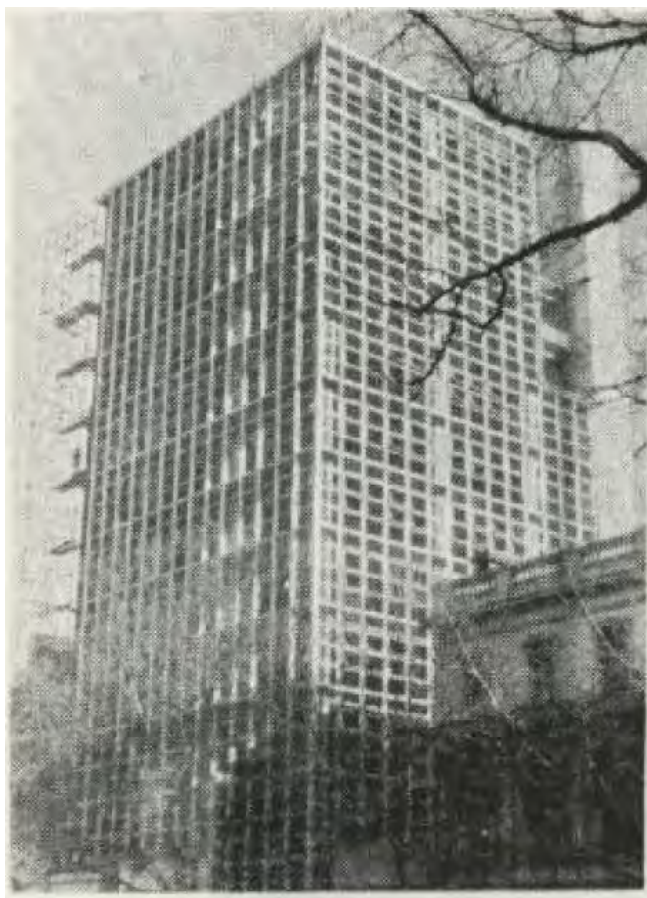


Figure 3. Photo of the building nearing completion, published in *Cross-Section* in July 1955.





Figure 4. Gilbert Court in 1955 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H88.40/950).



Figure 5. Gilbert Court, the premises of The Equitable Probate and General Life Insurance Co., in April 1957 (SLV, Lyle Fowler, photographer, Image H92.20/6016).



Figure 6. Gilbert Court, the premises of The Equitable Probate and General Life Insurance Co., in April 1957 (SLV, Lyle Fowler, photographer, Image H92.20/6017).



Figure 7. Entrance to Gilbert Court c1985 (Butler via Flickr).





Figure 8. The building in 1984 (City of Melbourne Libraries online Heritage Collection, Reference no. Butler13462).

### SITE DESCRIPTION

The Former Gilbert Court at 100-104 Collins Street is a 12-storey commercial building located on the north-west corner of Collins Street and Alfred Place. Constructed in 1954-55 to a design by John A La Gerche, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

Built to the then prevailing height limit of 40m (132 feet), Gilbert Court is square in plan with main frontages to Collins Street and Alfred Place. The building has a small footprint, occupying approximately one quarter of the block between Collins and Little Collins Streets. The building appears as a large transparent box with the two visible street facades presenting as entire walls of light aluminium frame and glass which wrap around the south-east corner. The service core occupies the west side of the building and presents to the exterior as a sheer wall.

The building is of reinforced concrete column and slab construction with the two adjacent curtain walls formed from aluminium framed windows and spandrels of blue obscure, but not opaque, glass. These curtain walls run continuously from the front corner of the west façade, around to a sheer wall at the rear of the east façade, which encompasses a secondary stair block. At this junction, the east facade steps back over the top floors, to accentuate the glass prism appearance of the building when viewed from Collins Street. The use of an entirely glazed façade was highly innovative at the time of

construction when the typical curtain wall incorporated opaque spandrels that obscured the view of the building's interior and provided a horizontal accent to the façade.

A slim projecting element delineates the upper façade from the street level shopfronts. The simplicity and transparency of the façade is continued at street level, with aluminium framed butt-jointed shopfronts and fully glazed doors and the absence of a verandah awning.

## **INTEGRITY**

Gilbert Court, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building, remains highly intact to its original construction in 1954-55.

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 minor alterations, particularly 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**

Gilbert Court at 100-104 Collins Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of the emerging multi-storey commercial building design of the mid-1950s. The building's two grid-like curtain wall façades, with rows of aluminium-framed glazing and blue obscure glass spandrels and vertical mullions, can be clearly observed from Collins Street and Alfred Place. The use of two adjacent and entirely glazed transparent façades on a corner site was highly innovative at the time of construction. Despite the redesign of the façade at street level, the upper facades of Gilbert Court remain highly intact to their original design.

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

### **State-significant places**

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

### **Locally-significant places**

#### *Precinct Heritage Overlay*

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



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

### *Other Examples*

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





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



Former Atlas Assurance Building, 404-406 Collins Street (H Garnet Alsop & Partners, 1958-61) (Interim HO1008).



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



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



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



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



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



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



Former AMP Building, 402-408 Lonsdale Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1956-58).

### Analysis

As a fine and highly intact representative example of its type, Gilbert Court at 101-104 Collins Street clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne. Similar to the small number of 1950s buildings presently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme – and a small number of other examples identified throughout the Hoddle Grid and listed above – Gilbert Court 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

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*The Argus*.

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**PREVIOUS STUDIES**

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**Central Activities District  
Conservation Study 1985** A

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**Central City Heritage  
Study 1993** A

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

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011** Ungraded

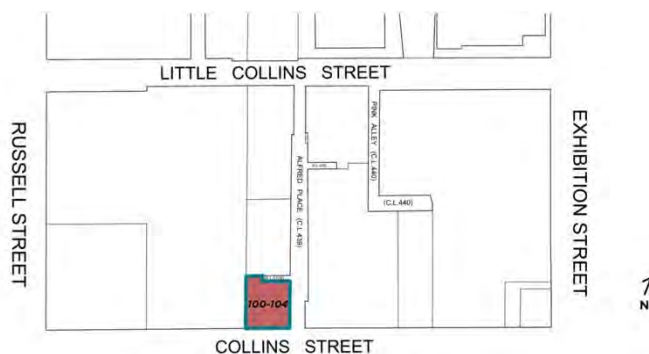
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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Former Gilbert Court



**PS ref no:** [HOXXXXHO1314](#)



### What is significant?

Former Gilbert Court at 100-104 Collins Street, a multi-storey office building constructed in 1954-55.

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.

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

### How it is significant?

Former Gilbert Court at 100-104 Collins Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

Constructed in 1954-55, to a design by John A La Gerche, Former Gilbert Court 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).

Former Gilbert Court is a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building. The building strongly reflects the style which was emerging in the mid-1950s and was popular in the late 1950s, particularly in central Melbourne. Constructed to the prevailing 40m (132 foot) height limit of the time, Former Gilbert Court clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a 1950s



structure with two adjacent, fully glazed curtain wall façades. The transparent façades of alternating rows of glazing and obscure glass spandrels, and vertical mullions which divide the facade into a grid-like pattern, and the use of materials such as blue obscure glass and aluminium window frames, demonstrate important aspects of the Modernist style. On completion it earned the title of Melbourne's first 'Glass Box' (Criterion D).

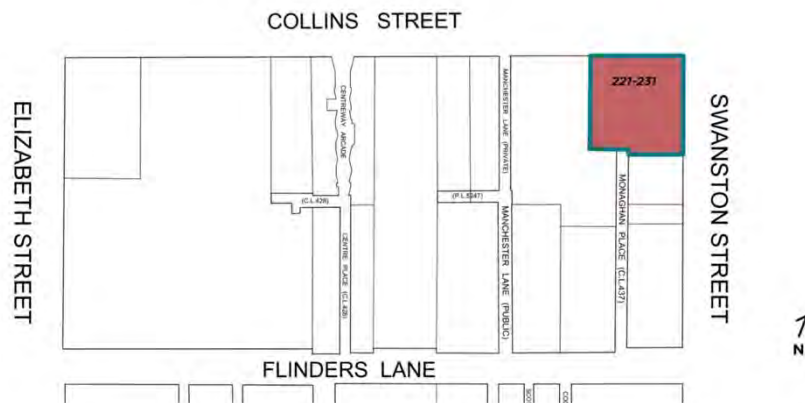
**Primary source**

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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>	Wales Corner
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	221-231 Collins Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	102079



<b>SURVEY DATE:</b> October 2019		<b>SURVEY BY:</b> GJM Heritage	
<b>HERITAGE INVENTORY</b>	No	<b>EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY</b>	HO502
<b>PLACE TYPE</b>	Individual Heritage Place	<b>PROPOSED CATEGORY</b>	Significant
		<b>FORMER CATEGORY</b>	Contributory
<b>DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:</b>	Stephenson & Turner	<b>BUILDER:</b>	Lewis Construction Co.
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	1964-1966

## 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 Lot 1 LP97149	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/Workshop, Medical, Café/Restaurant, Office, Merchant, Studio, Trade, Workshop, Caretaker
1920s	Retail, Library, Retail/Workshop, Medical, Hairdresser, Education, Office, Studio, Merchant, Registry Office, Caretaker
1960s	Retail, Storage, Hairdresser, Medical, Workshop, Office, Studio, Café/Restaurant, Bank, Education, Caretaker

## 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 building at the corner of Collins and Swanston streets, known as Wales Corner, was designed by architects Stephenson & Turner and constructed in 1964-66 for the Bank of New South Wales.

## 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 building known as Wales Corner was designed by architects Stephenson & Turner and constructed in 1964-66 for owners the Bank of New South Wales (BAP; Butler 1985: Building ID Form; *Age*, 18 Jul 1962:5). The builders were the Lewis Construction Co. (*Age*, 25 May 1965:23).

An article published in July 1962 featuring the proposed building, to be called 'Wales Corner', reported that construction of the corner building was to commence early in 1963. The building was to incorporate an arcade from Swanston to Collins Street that would accommodate seven shops, a shop for Damman's tobacconists who had occupied the corner site for more than 90 years, and a banking chamber. The upper floors were for business and professional suites, showrooms and office spaces (Figure 1 shows the earlier proposed design) (*Age*, 18 Jul 1962:5).

City of Melbourne received a building permit application for the new building in December 1964 (estimated to cost £1,128,000) (BAI). Architectural drawings by Stephenson & Turner dated 1962 and 1964 show a modified version of the earlier design (Figure 2 - Figure 5), comprising a corner tower and low-scale section to the south, fronting Swanston Street. This low-scale section comprised the arcade providing access to retail shops at ground level, and a rooftop garden to the first floor. The banking chambers and bank offices were to occupy the ground and first floors of the tower. The building was designed with reconstructed stone panels and fixed glazing and reversible sash windows to the exterior (BAP).

The building was completed in 1966 and the Bank of New South Wales branch had opened by September 1966 (*Age*, 5 Sep 1966:2). The Bank of New South Wales continued to occupy the building into the 1980s (Butler 1985: Building ID Form). In 2019, the banking chambers are occupied by Westpac Bank.

### **Stephenson & Turner, architects**

Stephenson & Turner was formed in 1921 as Stephenson & Meldrum by A G Stephenson and Percy Meldrum, who had met at London's Architectural Association. In 1925, the firm employed Keith Turner, who was well known for his design skills and headed up the newly-established Sydney office from 1934.

Stephenson & Meldrum specialised in hospital design. During the 1930s alone, the practice gained 20 major hospital commissions. In Melbourne, this included: Mercy Hospital, East Melbourne (1934), Freemasons' Hospital, East Melbourne (1935-36) and the Royal Melbourne Hospital (1938-39).

Meldrum split from the practice in 1937, having become uncomfortable with the firm's heightened focus on hospital work. It continued as Stephenson & Turner from this time, and from the 1940s onwards witnessed an extensive period of expansion. Offices were established in Newcastle, NSW (1947) and Adelaide, SA (1955), and internationally in Singapore (1949) and Wellington (1956). Offices in Auckland, Dunedin, Canberra and Hong Kong soon followed.

Though Turner retired from the practice in 1956, the firm continued to be known as Stephenson & Turner. Beyond their hospital work, the firm also designed industrial complexes, commercial office buildings, banks, town plans (including Shepparton in 1946) and the Australian pavilions at the Paris Exposition (1937) and the New York World's Fair (1939-40). Office buildings designed by Stephenson & Turner in Melbourne in the postwar period included 390 Lonsdale Street (1959); the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Building at 308-334 Collins Street (1963); Wales Corner at 221-231 Collins Street (1964-66) and Embank House at 325 Collins Street (1965).



Figure 1. An earlier proposed design, published in July 1962 (*Age*, 18 Jul 1962:5).

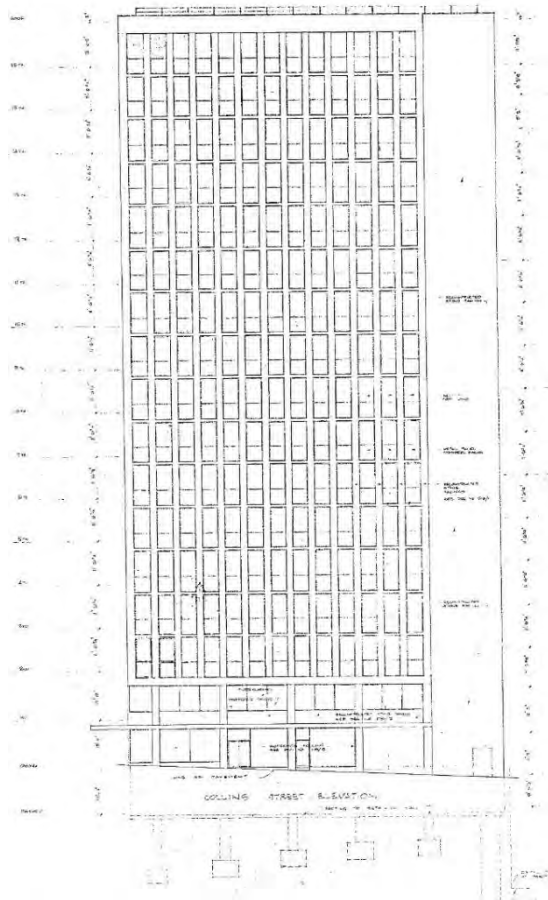


Figure 2. Northern elevation to Collins Street. Drawings by Stephenson & Turner, dated August 1964 (BAP).

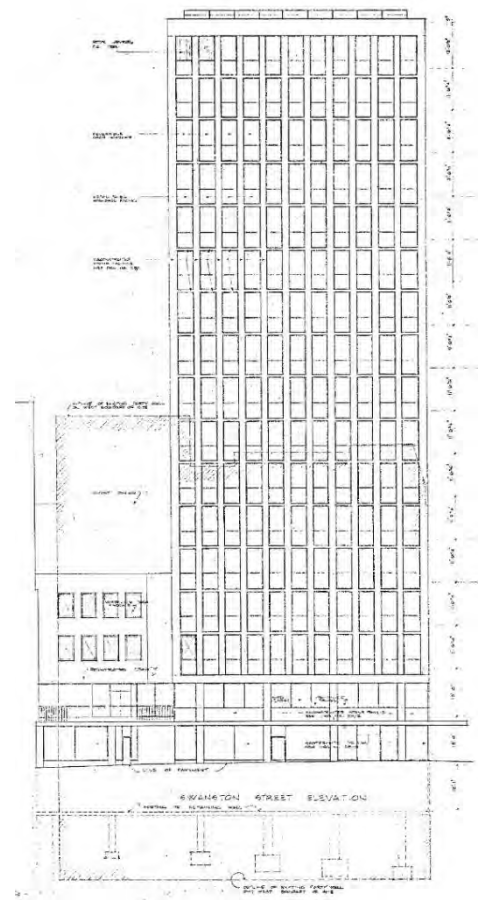


Figure 3. Eastern elevation to Swanston Street. Drawings by Stephenson & Turner, dated August 1964 (BAP).



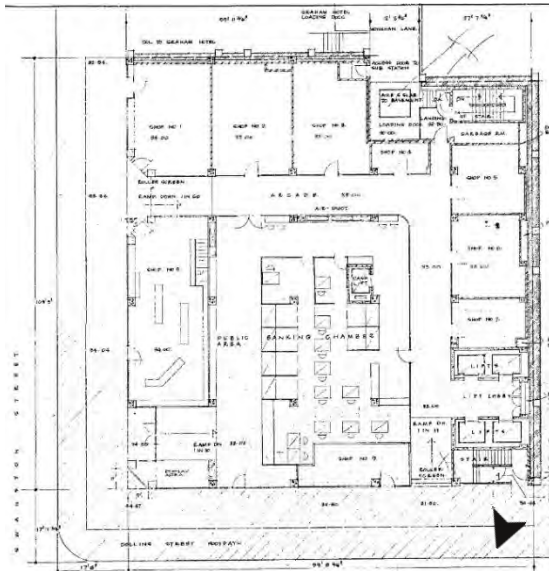


Figure 4. Ground floor plan showing the banking chambers, arcade and retail spaces. Drawings by Stephenson & Turner, dated October 1962 (BAP).

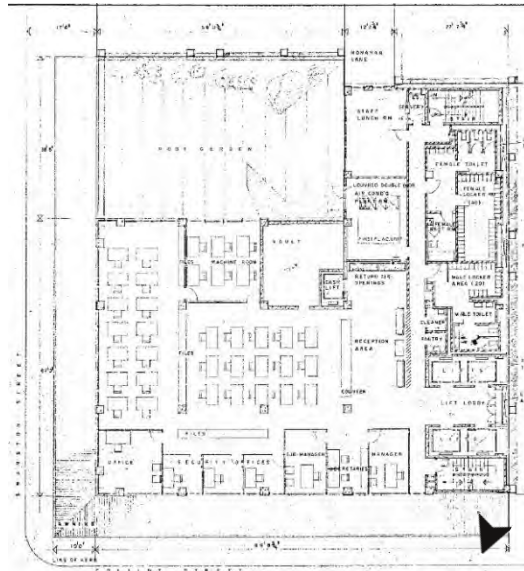


Figure 5. First floor plan showing the bank offices and rooftop garden. Drawings by Stephenson & Turner, dated August 1962 (BAP).



Figure 6. Wales Corner in 1969 (Victorian Places).





Figure 7. Wales Corner in 1984 (City of Melbourne Libraries online Heritage Collection, Reference no. Butler13511).

## SITE DESCRIPTION

Wales Corner at 221-231 Collins Street is a 16-storey commercial building located at the south-west corner of Swanston and Collins streets. This is a prominent site in central Melbourne and the building has frontages to both main streets. Constructed in 1964-66 to a design by Stephenson and Turner, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

The building is rectangular in plan with a broad frontage to Collins Street. To the south of the main tower is a low-rise section of building with roof garden at first floor level, fronting Swanston Street, and a four-storey section to the rear (west). Monaghan Place provides access to the south side of the building from Flinders Lane. An arcade, accessed from Swanston Street, is located below the roof garden. Tower facades are glazed, with the exception of the solid west façade and the western portion of the north façade which are faced with reconstructed stone and enclose the service core at the western end of the building.

The building is of reinforced concrete column and slab construction with curtain wall facades to the north, east and south. Reconstructed stone-faced mullions and fine horizontal members divide the glazed facades into a regular grid-like pattern by framing rectangular bays of aluminium-framed windows and metal spandrel panels. A simple parapet and corner piers, set flush with the grid-like surface, frame the glazed facades. The reduced height first-floor level, directly above the street canopy, is treated in a contrasting manner to the façade above, with broader window sets and a reduced number of vertical mullions providing a visual base to the building.

At the ground level, a canopy with broad fascia lines both the principal facades to Collins and Swanston streets. It appears that this has replaced, or obscures, an earlier cantilevered canopy which was lighter in appearance. An additional canopy has been placed at the western end of the Collins Street façade.

### **INTEGRITY**

Wales Corner, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building above street level, remains highly intact to its original construction in 1964-66. 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 commercial building.

### **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

Wales Corner at 221-231 Collins Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of 1960s to mid 1970s multi-storey commercial building design. Located on a prominent corner site and set on a podium base, the building's three grid-like glazed curtain wall facades of alternating rows of aluminium-framed glazing and metal spandrels, each divided by broad reconstructed stone-faced mullions and fine horizontal members, can be clearly observed from both Collins and Swanston streets. Despite the redesign of the street-level facades, the upper facades of Wales Corner 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 Wales Corner. 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).



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)



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

### Analysis

As a fine and highly representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building, Wales Corner at 221-231 Collins Street clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey commercial buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne. Similar to 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 – Wales Corner 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

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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** 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

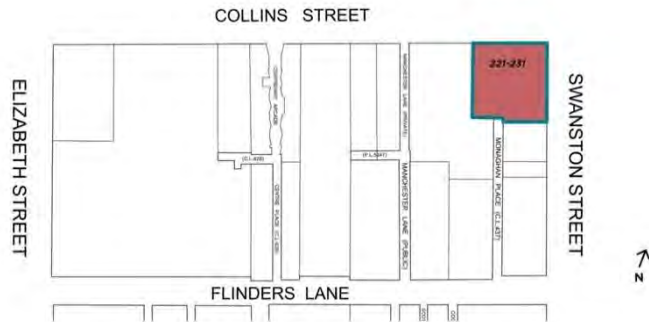
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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### Heritage Place: Wales Corner



PS ref no: [HOXXXXHO1315](#)



### What is significant?

Wales Corner, 221-231 Collins Street, a multi-storey office building constructed in 1964-66.

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?

Wales Corner at 221-231 Collins Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

Constructed in 1964-66 to a design by Stephenson & Turner, Wales Corner 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).

Wales Corner 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 16-storey building on a prominent corner in Collins Street, Wales Corner clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a 1960s to mid 1970s structure, including a solid exterior of three grid-like glazed curtain wall facades containing alternating rows of

glazing and solid spandrels, broad dividing mullions and fine horizontal members, a podium base and the use of materials such as metal spandrel cladding, aluminium framed windows and reconstructed stone facing. These demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style (Criterion D).

**Primary source**

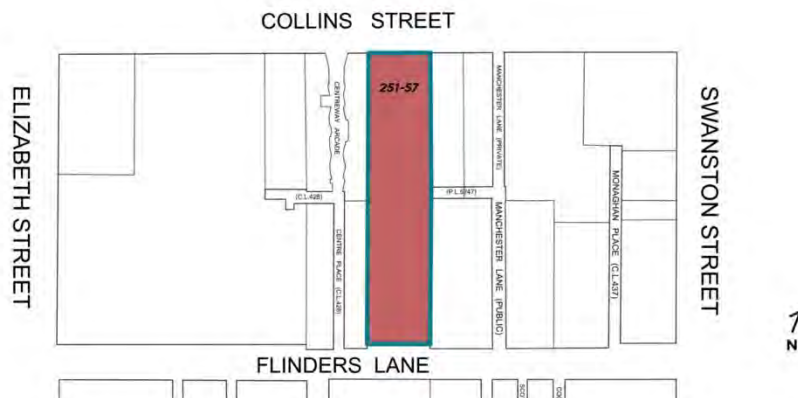
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~~[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\)](#)~~ [Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\) \(updated March 2022\)](#)





<b>SITE NAME</b>	Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building [also known as Emirates House (current name)]
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	251-257 Collins Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	102083



<b>SURVEY DATE:</b> October 2019		<b>SURVEY BY:</b> GJM Heritage	
<b>HERITAGE INVENTORY</b>	No	<b>EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY</b>	HO502 (fronting Collins St) & HO506 (fronting Flinders Lane)
<b>PLACE TYPE</b>	Individual Heritage Place	<b>PROPOSED CATEGORY</b>	Significant
		<b>FORMER CATEGORY</b>	Non-contributory
<b>DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:</b>	Bates Smart & McCutcheon	<b>BUILDER:</b>	Not known
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	1971-1973

## 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 Buiness and finance

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Bank
1920s	Bank
1960s	Bank, Caretaker

## 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, extending from Collins Street to Flinders Lane, was designed by Bates Smart & McCutcheon to serve as the Melbourne offices of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Ltd. The building was constructed in 1971-1973.

## 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 building, extending from Collins Street to Flinders Lane, was designed by Bates Smart & McCutcheon to serve as the Melbourne offices of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Ltd (CBCS).

The Bank of Victoria purchased 251 Collins Street in 1859, constructing a bank by 1862. The Bank of Victoria merged with CBCS in 1927, soon after which a new building was constructed behind the 1862 façade. This building, also designed by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, was demolished in 1971 for the present building (NTAV, VHD; *Cross-Section*, March 1970).

The major designer on the project was Bates Smart & McCutcheon's Robert Bruce (Goad 2004:205).<sup>1</sup> In March 1970, the University of Melbourne's publication *Cross-Section* reported on the intended \$10 million, 16-storey state headquarters for CBCS. The building was constructed in 1971-73 (BAP; Goad 2004:205).

The architectural drawings by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, dated 1969, show the multi-storey tower to Collins Street and the low-scale section fronting Flinders Lane (Figure 1 - Figure 3). Goad

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<sup>1</sup> Goad appears to erroneously address the subject site as 250 Collins Street throughout the 2004 publication.

described the building's design (drawing similarities to Bates Smart & McCutcheon's design of 363-371 Collins Street) as having a 'strong horizontal emphasis that indicated graphic trabeated construction' and glazing set back deeply from the face of the building, which were 'clear expressions of structure' (Goad 2004:205). At ground level, Goad noted, the tower broke the line of the 'street wall' in favour of the current Melbourne City Council building regulations for mini-plazas. The multi-level banking chamber 'took advantage of pedestrian movement between Flinders Lane and Collins Street', essentially continuing Melbourne's network of lanes and arcades within the building itself (Goad 2004:205). The exterior was clad with 'reconstructed granite-faced precast concrete wall units' (*Architect* Jul-Aug 1973).

Photographs dating to 1973 and 1974 show the completed building (Figures 5-9). In 2019 the building is called Emirates House (ComMaps).

### **Bates Smart & McCutcheon, architects**

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

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

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

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

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

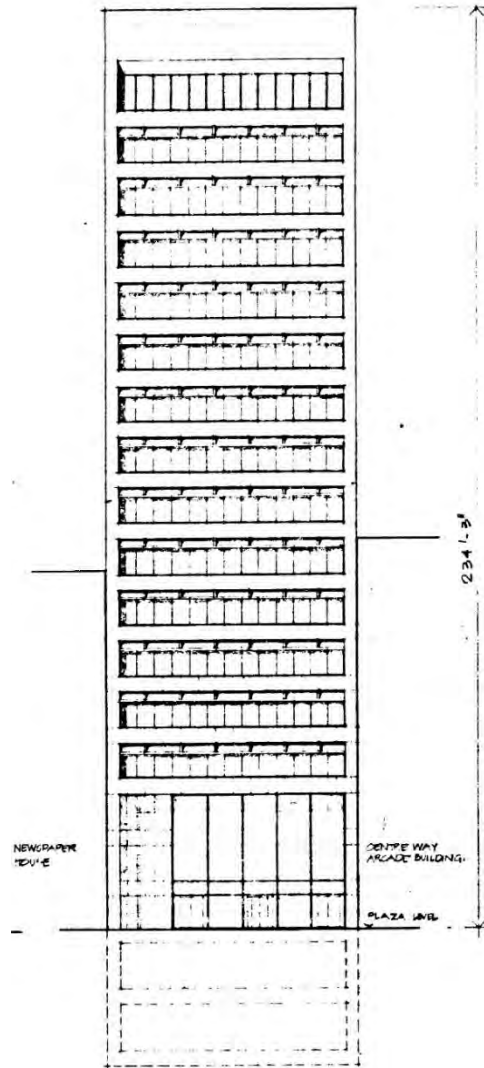


Figure 1. North elevation, fronting Collins Street.  
Drawings by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, dated May 1969 (BAP).

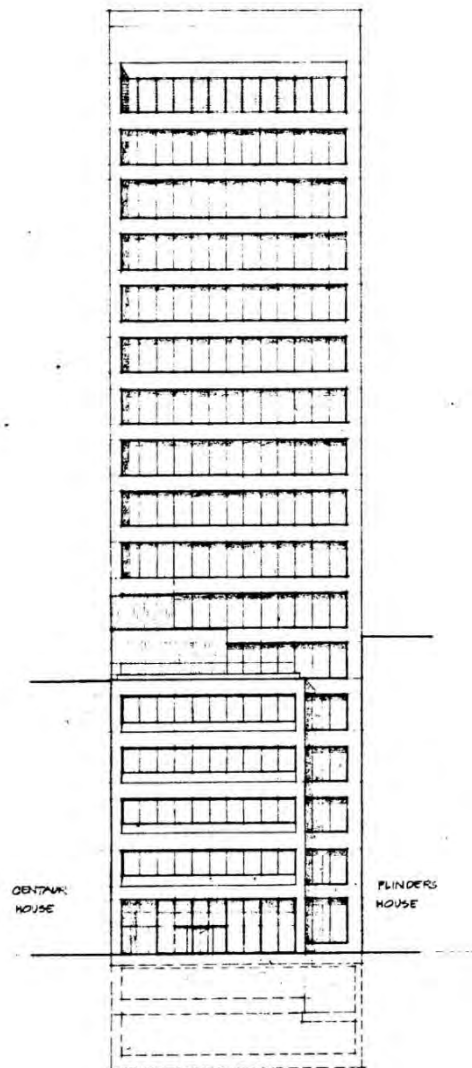


Figure 2. South elevation, fronting Flinders Lane.  
Drawings by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, dated May 1969 (BAP).

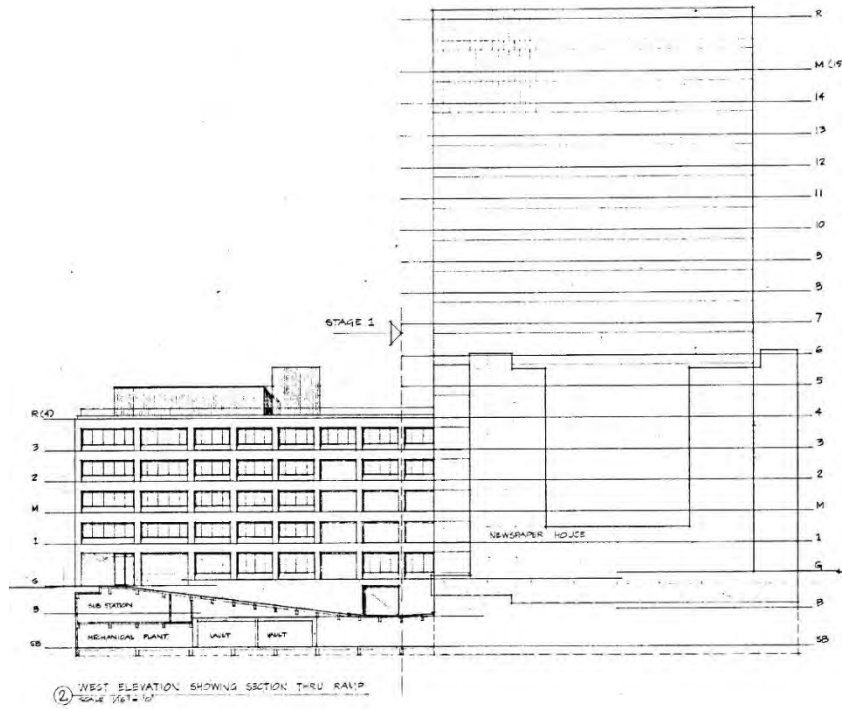


Figure 3. West elevation, showing a section through the ramp. Drawings by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, dated May 1969 (BAP).



Figure 4. Construction at the subject site, c1972 (SLV, K. J. Halla, photographer, Image H36133/537).



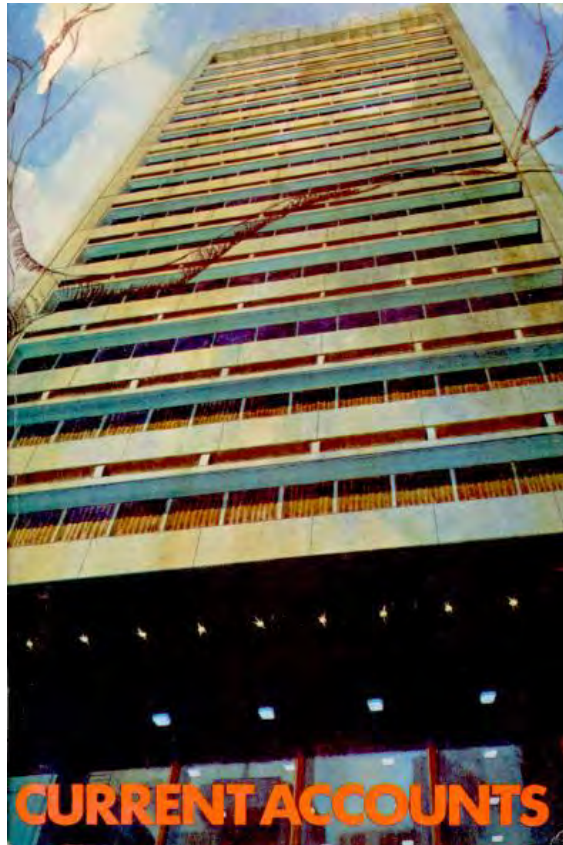


Figure 5. Illustration of the building, published in the 1973 CBC Sydney publication *Current Accounts*.



Figure 6. Image of the building published in the July-August 1973 issue of *Architect*, advertising reconstructed granite cladding by Melocco (*Architect*, Jul-Aug 1973).



Figure 7. The Collins Street elevation of the completed building; no date to photo (Goad 2004:209).





Figure 8. Collins Street entrance, photo dated 1973 (NLA, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, object 3064580).



Figure 9. Photo published in January 1974, of the Trading Bank area on the first floor (*Current Accounts*, Jan 1974).

## SITE DESCRIPTION

The Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street is a 15-storey commercial building located on the south side of Collins Street between Elizabeth and Swanston Streets. Constructed from 1971-73 to a design by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

Of rectangular plan with narrow frontages to Collins Street and Flinders Lane to the south, the building is accessible from both frontages. The building is set back from Collins Street – a feature for which additional height to the building was allowed. There are no side setbacks; however the main tower has a substantial setback from Flinders Lane, with an additional low-rise section of building fronting the latter. An access lane from Flinders Lane (Flinders Way) flanks the eastern side of this low-rise component and leads to the rear of the main tower.

The building is of concrete encased steel column and beam construction, with the structural system clearly expressed on the identically detailed north and south facades. These walls have deeply

recessed bands of windows behind rows of reconstructed granite-faced precast concrete wall units with suspended sunhoods, and a heavy crowning parapet with splayed underside. Concrete floor slabs extend beyond the line of the windows to support the precast elements, creating a structural, rather than curtain wall, façade. The strongly horizontal elements of the facades are framed by the solid vertical faces of the side walls which present unadorned facades above the adjacent buildings.

The detailing of the Flinders Street façade of the low-rise portion of building at the rear is simpler than that of the tower. Maintaining a strong horizontal emphasis, it comprises splayed-top precast concrete spandrels which alternate with rows of glazing.

A double-storey structure has recently been built across the lower Collins Street façade at ground level, utilising the original setback of the multi-storey building. This double-height addition contains two shopfronts and a central entrance to the main tower, all set below a fine projecting canopy. At the rear, a simple canopy and shopfront have been inserted below the lower splayed-top spandrel, with a recessed entrance to the building on the western side.

### **INTEGRITY**

The Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building above street level, remains highly intact to its original construction in 1971-73. Recent additions to the Collins Street and Flinders Lane frontages of the building at street level have altered the original design at the base of the building.

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

### **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

The Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of a 1960s to mid 1970s multi-storey commercial building design. Clearly expressing the internal structure, the building has identically detailed front and rear structural facades, with horizontal bands of precast concrete wall units with integral sunhoods, deeply recessed bands of windows and heavy splayed parapet. Despite modifications to the lower Collins Street façade, the upper facades of the building remain highly intact to their original design and can be clearly observed from Collins Street.

There are a number of buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street. These are detailed below.

#### **State-significant places**

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

- Total House, 170-90 Russell Street (Bogle & Banfield 1964-65; VHR H2329 & HO1095)
- Former Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-44 Bourke Street (Peter Muller 1966-69)

- Victorian Government Offices, Treasury Reserve Precinct (Yuncken Freeman 1967-68 – outside the Hoddle Grid)
- Eagle House, 473 Bourke Street (Yuncken Freeman 1971-72; VHR H1807 & HO901)
- BHP House, 130-148 William Street (Yuncken Freeman 1969-72; VHR H1699 & HO767).

### Locally-significant places

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

#### *Precinct Heritage Overlay*



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



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



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



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)

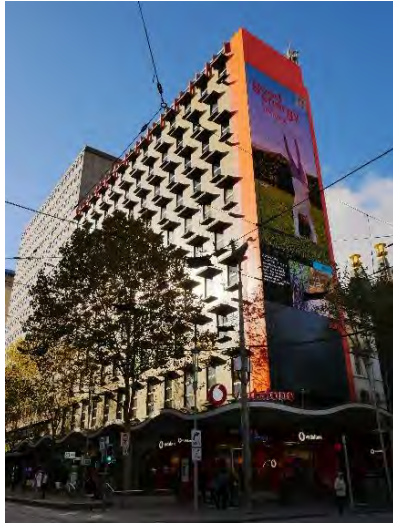


Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)



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)



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 office building, the Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey office buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne. Similar to 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*

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Building Application Plans (BAP), City of Melbourne.

City of Melbourne Maps (CoMMaps), Site Details.

*Cross-Section*: No. 208, March 1970.

*Current Accounts* [CBC Sydney publication], (1973 & 1974), via CBC Officers Club, 'Melbourne office, 257 Collins Street, Melbourne', <<http://www.cbcbank.com.au/images/Branches/VIC/VIC%20Melb%20Office.htm>> accessed 23 October 2019.

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

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

National Trust of Australia, Victoria (NTAV) Victorian Heritage Database (VHD) record, <<https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/>>, accessed 23 October 2019:

'Former Bank of Victoria, 251 Collins Street, MELBOURNE, MELBOURNE CITY'

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

**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

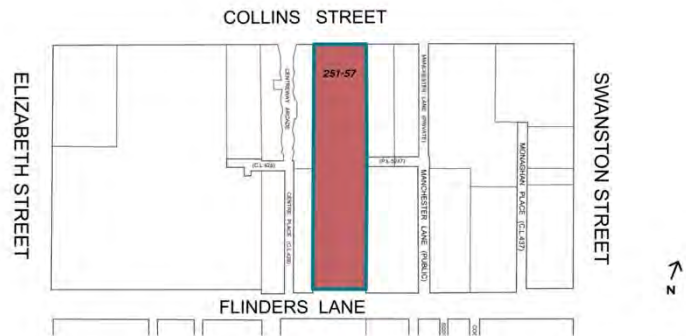
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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building



**PS ref no:** [HOXXXXHO1316](#)



### What is significant?

The Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, 251-257 Collins Street, a multi-storey office building constructed in 1971-73.

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 high level of integrity to its original design.

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

**How it is significant?**

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The Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

**Why it is significant?**

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Constructed in 1971-73, to a design by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, the Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building has a clear association with the postwar building boom which transformed central Melbourne into a modern high-rise city. The design of these commercial buildings from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s – many of which were architect designed – was driven by the commercial demands and the prestige afforded by a dominant city presence (Criterion A).

The Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney 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 15-storey building in Collins Street, the Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a later postwar structure including identically detailed front and rear structural facades which clearly express the structure externally, wall cladding with integral suspended sunhoods shading deeply recessed bands of continuous glazing, strong horizontal lines across the facades and the use of materials such as precast concrete panels. These details demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style (Criterion D).

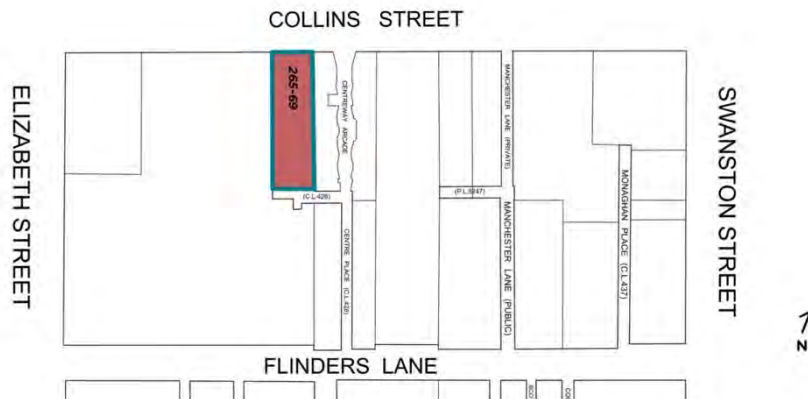
**Primary source**

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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 Bank of Adelaide Building
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	265-269 Collins Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	102085



**SURVEY DATE:** October 2019

**SURVEY BY:** GJM Heritage

<b>HERITAGE INVENTORY</b>	No	<b>EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY</b>	HO502
<b>PLACE TYPE</b>	Individual Heritage Place	<b>PROPOSED CATEGORY</b>	Significant
		<b>FORMER CATEGORY</b>	Contributory
<b>DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:</b>	Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb	<b>BUILDER:</b>	E A Watts Pty Lt
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	1959-1960

## 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
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Buiness and finance

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Bank, Office, Studio, Retail, Residence
1920s	Bank, Office, Retail/Service, Studio, Caretaker
1960s	Bank

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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

**Extent of overlay:** To extent of property boundary

## SUMMARY

The Former Bank of Adelaide Building was designed by architects and engineers Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb to serve as the Melbourne headquarters for the Bank of Adelaide. It was constructed in 1959-1960 by E A Watts Pty Ltd.

## CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

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

### Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

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

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

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

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

### **Business and finance in the postwar period**

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

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

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

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

### **SITE HISTORY**

The Former Bank of Adelaide Building was designed by architects and engineers Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb to serve as the Melbourne headquarters for the Bank of Adelaide (BAP; *Cross-Section*, May 1959:3). It was constructed in 1959-1960 by E A Watts Pty Ltd (*Cross-Section*, May 1959:3; *Age*, 8 Apr 1959:1).

The Bank of Adelaide had occupied the site of the existing building from 1920 (S&Mc; *Age*, 8 Apr 1959:1). In August 1958 the bank announced its temporary residency at 319 Collins Street, during the demolition of the bank's old premises and construction of a new building at the site (*Age*, 16 Aug 1958:4). The earlier building was demolished in September 1958 (*Age*, 8 Apr 1959:1).

Architectural drawings dated October 1958 show the north (Collins Street) elevation and the design of the original entrance with its glazed aluminium entrance screen and granite facing surrounds. Annotations to the drawings indicate that the north elevation was designed as an 'anodised aluminium curtain wall' with marble spandrels, stone surrounds and granite edging. The stairwell at the east side of the façade was designed with fixed glazing and marble spandrels (Figure 1). The layout placed the

banking chamber on the ground floor, bank offices on the first floor, and office spaces to let on the remaining floors (Figure 2) (BAP).

The City of Melbourne received a building permit application for the new building in January 1959 (with an estimated total cost of £570,000) (BAI). The development was subsequently discussed in contemporary newspapers and architectural publications. The *Age* reported in April 1959 that construction of the 11-storey building had commenced (Figure 3) stating,

*The new building, one of the most modern occupied by a bank in Melbourne, will take advantage of the recent modifications in the building code, and will cover the maximum area permitted on a site of its size.*

The article stated that, at 154 feet tall, the building was to be the first building in the central city area to exceed the old height limit of 132 feet (40m) (*Age*, 8 Apr 1959:1).

In May 1959, the University of Melbourne publication *Cross-Section* reported on the new Melbourne headquarters for the Bank of Adelaide that was under construction. It noted that the building would be Victoria's first major building using concrete with a light-weight aggregate (*Cross-Section*, May 1959:3). The new lightweight aggregate, 'Shalite', produced structural concrete to specified strength and almost half the weight. The aggregate was used on various contemporary buildings including the subject site (*Age*, 4 May 1960:9).

The groundfloor shopfront has been altered at various stages (Figure 6).

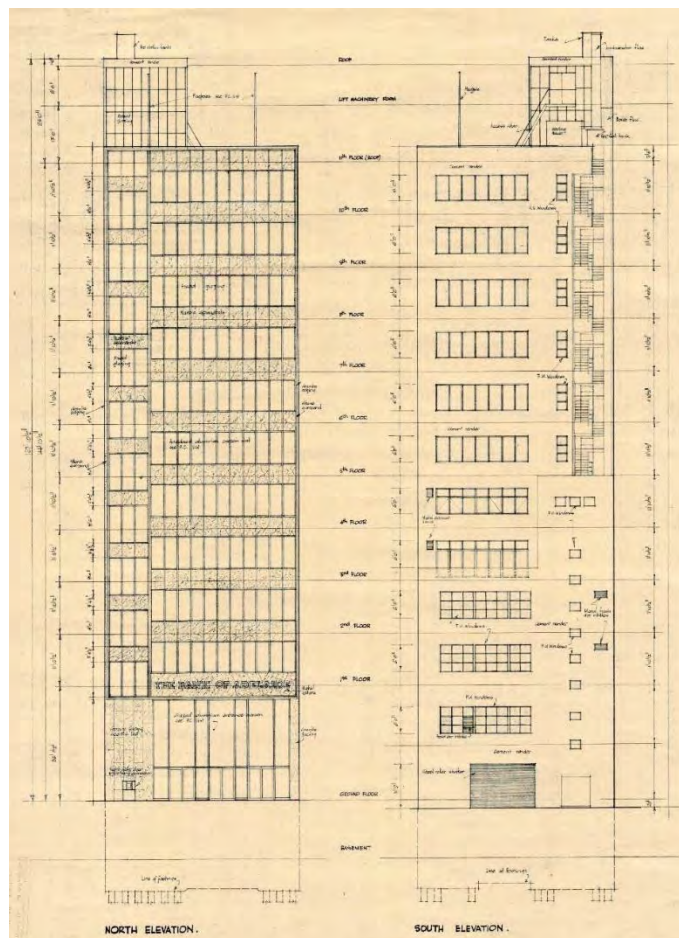


Figure 1. North (Collins Street) and south elevations. Drawings by Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, dated October 1958 (BAP).



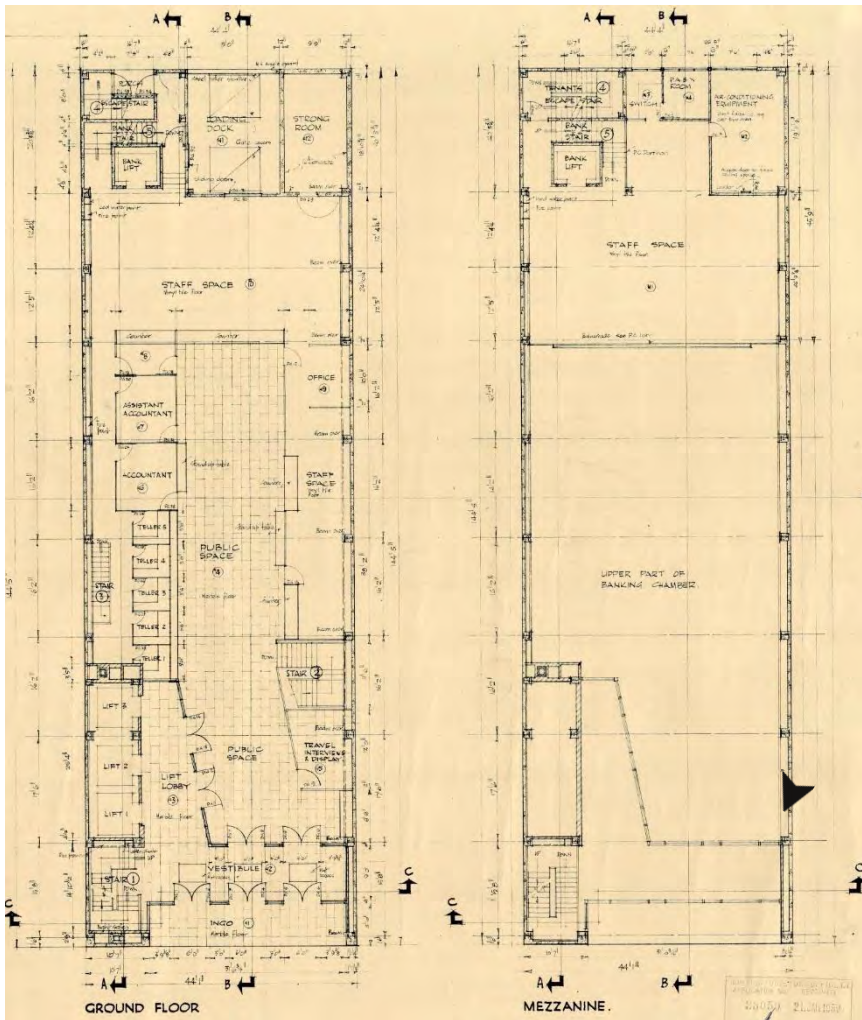


Figure 2. Ground and mezzanine floor plans, occupied by the bank. Drawings by Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, dated October 1958 (BAP).

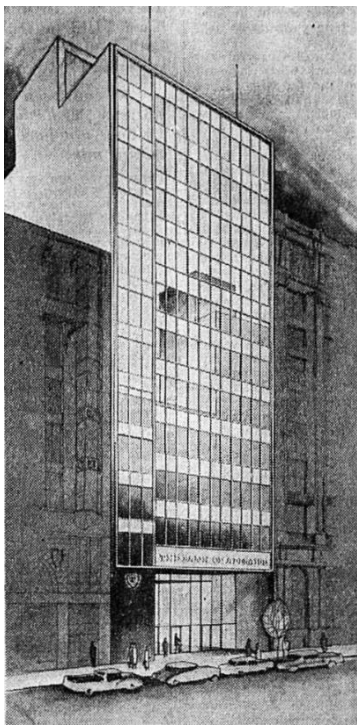


Figure 3. Illustration of the building, published in *The Age* in April 1959 (*Age*, 8 Apr 1959:1).



Figure 4. Bank of Adelaide in 1960 (SLV, Mark Strzic, photographer, Image H2011.55/1445).



Figure 5. Detail of a photo taken 1960 (SLV, Mark Strzic, photographer, Image H2011.55/1462).



Figure 6. The building in 1984 with an altered ground floor shopfront (City of Melbourne Libraries online Heritage Collection, Reference no. Butler13528).

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

Godfrey and Spowers was established in c1901 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 bank building designs.

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 c1934. 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.

**SITE DESCRIPTION**

The Former Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street is an 11-storey commercial building located on the south side of Collins Street between Elizabeth Street and Swanston Street. Constructed in 1959-60 to a design by Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

Rectangular in plan, the building has a narrow frontage to Collins Street and rear access is via a laneway from Flinders Lane. The Modernist design of the Collins Street façade is emphasised by the substantial classically-inspired early twentieth century buildings which flank the building. Located on the opposite side of Collins Street is the similarly Modernist-styled Allans Building which was designed by the same architects in 1956-57.

The building is of concrete encased steel column and beam construction with the Collins Street façade presenting as a tall, narrow and transparent curtain wall of anodised aluminium framing with alternating rows of fixed glazing and solid spandrels. Stone surrounds frame the individual window and spandrel panels, forming continuous vertical and horizontal lines across the front façade.

Unlike the majority of glazed curtain wall buildings of the period, the front facade combines two curtain wall sections which vary in dimension and create an asymmetrical composition. An internal staircase to the east is distinguished from the remainder of the front facade by the use of smaller spandrels which align with the centre of the window banding of the main curtain wall, creating a subtle staggered effect. Original architectural drawings indicate that the spandrel panels were to be clad in marble. It is difficult to identify the material used in the main spandrels and it appears that the smaller spandrel panels to the east may have been re-clad.

Continuous vertical elements run from above street level to the top of the building across the entire façade, creating a grid-like pattern between slim granite-clad concrete side walls and the top parapet which frames the composition. In both sections of curtain walling, the alternating horizontal bands are



of different height, with taller window bands resulting in rectangular glazed units and spandrels of square proportion.

The rear wall of the building is of cement rendered concrete and contains a number of fixed window units.

Modifications have been made to the front façade below the first-floor strip of glazing. This includes removal of the original glazed entrance screen, granite facing and first floor spandrel. Recent framing has been inserted into this façade at street level.

## **INTEGRITY**

The Former Bank of Adelaide Building, including the original form and detailing of the exterior of the building above street level, remains highly intact to its original construction of 1959-60. Works to the front of the building at street level has altered the original design of this frontage.

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

## **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

The Former Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of a 1950s multi-storey commercial building design. The building's transparent grid-like curtain wall façade, with alternating rows of aluminium-framed glazing and opaque spandrels and vertical mullions, can be clearly observed from Collins Street. The curtain wall façade is unusually divided into two unequal vertical parts – both comprising alternating rows of fixed glazing and opaque spandrels, and stone framing which forms a grid of continuous vertical and horizontal lines across the two individual sections of the front façade. Despite the redesign of the façade at street level, the upper facades of the Former Bank of Adelaide Building remain highly intact to their original design.

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

### **State-significant places**

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

### **Locally-significant places**

#### *Precinct Heritage Overlay*

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



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



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



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



Former Allans Building, 276-278 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton & Lobb, 1956-1957) included in HO502 The Block Precinct as a Significant place.

### *Other Examples*

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





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



Former Atlas Assurance Building, 404-406 Collins Street (H Garnet Alsop & Partners, 1958-61) (Interim HO1008).



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



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



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



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



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



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



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

### Analysis

As a fine and highly intact representative example of its type, the Former Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne. Similar to the small number of 1950s buildings presently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme – and a small number of other examples identified throughout the Hoddle Grid and listed above – the Former Bank of Adelaide 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).

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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 43.01-4)	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.

*Cross-Section*: No. 79, May 1959.

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.

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

Sands & McDougall Directories (S&Mc).

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

*The Age*.



**PREVIOUS STUDIES**

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**Central Activities District  
Conservation Study 1985** E

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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 Bank of Adelaide Building



**PS ref no:** HO~~XX~~1317~~XX~~



### What is significant?

The Former Bank of Adelaide Building, 265-269 Collins Street, a multi-storey office building constructed in 1959-60.

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

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

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

### How it is significant?

The Former Bank of Adelaide at 265-269 Collins Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

Constructed in 1959-60, to a design by Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, the Former Bank of Adelaide 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. The Former Bank of Adelaide Building was constructed as one of the first buildings to exceed the pre-existing 40m (132 foot) height limit within the Melbourne CBD (Criterion A).

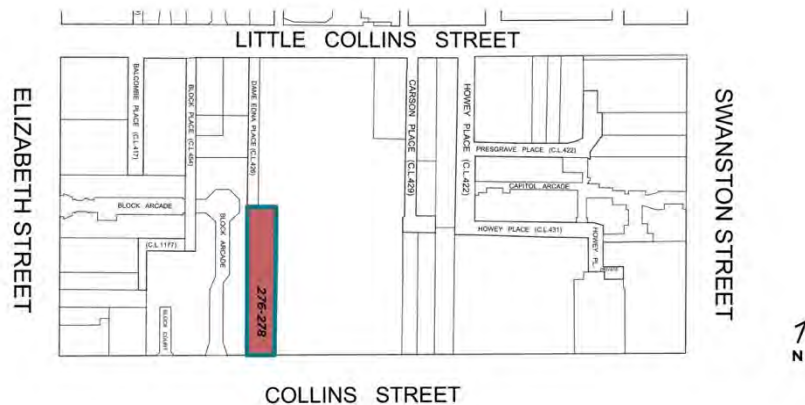
The Former Bank of Adelaide Building is a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building. The building strongly reflects the style which was popular in the 1950s, particularly in central Melbourne, incorporating a curtain wall street facade. The transparent front façade of alternating rows of aluminium-framed glazing and opaque spandrels, and vertical mullions which divide the façade into a grid-like pattern, demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style. The incorporation of two contrasting grids in the front façade is unusual and distinctive (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 Allans Building [also known as Mering House (current name)]
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	276-278 Collins Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	102142



SURVEY DATE: October 2019

SURVEY BY: GJM Heritage

<b>HERITAGE INVENTORY</b>	H7822-1747	<b>EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY</b>	HO502
<b>PLACE TYPE</b>	Individual Heritage Place	<b>PROPOSED CATEGORY</b>	Significant
		<b>FORMER CATEGORY</b>	Significant
<b>DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:</b>	Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb with Charles N Hollinshed	<b>BUILDER:</b>	Hansen & Yuncken Pty Ltd
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	1956-1957

## THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
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POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style
3 Building a commercial city	3.3 Retail decline and revitalisation in the city centre

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Retail, Education
1920s	Retail
1960s	Retail, Merchant, Hairdresser, Office, Education, Library, Caretaker

## 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 Allans Building was designed by architects and engineers, Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, in association with architect Charles N Hollinshed, for the well-known music retailers and publishers of sheet music, Allans & Co Pty Ltd. The building was constructed in 1956-1957.



## 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.

### Retail decline and revitalisation in the city centre

Central Melbourne and Central Sydney accounted for approximately one third of Australian metropolitan retail sales in the 1950s. However, the 1950s saw city retailers increasingly struggle to attract consumers from the suburbs, largely due to the increase in car ownership in the postwar period. To counteract this, in 1953 Myer Ltd erected the first multi-storey carpark to be built since World War II in Lonsdale Street. Another carpark, the Grand Central Carpark, opened in Bourke Street soon afterwards (Heritage Alliance 2008:16).

Suburban development and the construction of suburban shopping complexes such as Chadstone Shopping Centre also had a major impact on Melbourne's city centre into the 1960s with traditional businesses including shops, manufacturing and professional services moving to new suburban locations (Spearritt cited in Marsden 2000:49). Several city department stores closed and were demolished or converted to other uses. The Eastern Market (located at the corner of Bourke and Exhibition streets) was demolished in 1960 to make way for the Southern Cross Hotel (Marsden 2000:49).

Some inner-city retailing persisted in this period with Allans and Co opening a new music store at 276-278 Collins Street in 1957 and Myer constructing the Department Aerial Crossover, a four-storey pedestrian bridge over Little Bourke Street designed by longtime Myer architects Tompkins, Shaw and Evans (1963) (Lewis et al 1993:264).

Alliances between government ministers, councillors and traders sought to halt the decline of retail in the Melbourne city centre. Two main strategies emerged: to expedite car access and, from the 1970s, to encourage pedestrians through, for example, the creation of car-free malls, Sunday trading, and the establishment of open-air markets (Marsden 2000:51-52).

In an effort to revive the city's waning retail economy, a trial closure of Bourke Street between Swanston and Elizabeth streets was introduced in late 1973. This followed discussions between MCC and the Retail Trader's Association. The trial resulted in protests from shop keepers and caused traffic chaos (May 2008c). The 1974 Strategy Plan pursued the concept, encouraging 'the maintenance and growth of the retail areas as the major centre for shopping for the metropolitan area' (City of Melbourne 1974:267), but it was February 1978 before the section was formally closed to through traffic. Policies within the Strategy Plan also aimed to counteract:

*present economic market forces that would force entertainment and retail activities out of the CBD. The mandatory requirements for retail or entertainment floor space will ensure that the variety provided by shops, restaurants or cinemas is maintained* (Interplan for CoM 1974:267).

### SITE HISTORY

The Former Allans Building was designed by architects and engineers, Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, in association with architect Charles N Hollinshed, for owners Allan & Co Pty Ltd, music retailers and publishers of sheet music (BAP; *Argus*, 5 May 1956:3). The builders were Hansen & Yuncken Pty Ltd (AIA, Dec 1959:135).

George Leavis Allan (1826-1897) was a singing teacher and musical pioneer in Melbourne. He was born in London but the lure of gold led him to Melbourne in 1852. After a short stint in the goldfields, Allan returned to Melbourne in 1853 to capitalise on his musical expertise, establishing himself as a

well-respected singing teacher. In 1863 Allan joined the musical warehouse of Wilkie & Webster (est. 1850), forming Wilkie, Webster & Allan, and in 1875 he became the sole proprietor of the business. By 1877 it was the largest musical warehouse in the southern hemisphere. His son George became partner in 1881 when the name of the company was formally changed to Allan & Co. The business remained in the Allan family for many generations (Hince 1969; *Argus*, 25 Jun 1932:6). In 1976 the company was taken over by Brash Holdings, however the instrument sales department emerged from the liquidation of Brash's as a separate company in 1998 (May, 2008). Allan's merged with Billy Hyde music in 2010.

In June 1956, the City of Melbourne received a building permit application for the building at 276-278 Collins Street, with an estimated total cost of £341,000 (BAI). The building was constructed in 1956-1957 (Goad et al. 1993: 25).

Allan & Co Pty Ltd had occupied the site from at least the 1870s, with an earlier building constructed in 1876 (*Illustrated Australian News*, 27 Dec 1876:204; S&Mc). This earlier building was destroyed by fire and in May 1955 it was subsequently reported that Allan's intended to build a new 10-storey 'Music House' on the same site (*Cross-Section*, May 1955:3, Jun 1956:2; *Argus* 11 May 1955:1).

The present building is a glass curtain walled office and retail building, which was built to the 40m (132 foot) height limit in place at the time (NTAV 2014:17). The architectural drawings dated April 1956 indicate that the façade was designed with 'terracotta facing' to the vertical strips extending up the sides of the façade and metal-framed windows (Figure 1 - Figure 3).

In May 1956, *The Argus* reported that the new building was to comprise 11 floors and a basement. The lower floors were to be occupied by the music store, with the upper floors to be let. The article reported that the 'front of the building will be faced with aluminium panels between aluminium windows. The ground and first floor were to have a 'full glass front', and include acoustically treated ceilings, heating, a giant piano showroom and television display centre (*Argus*, 5 May 1956:3). The completed building is at Figure 4 to Figure 7.

Allans occupied the building until at least c1982 (S&Mc). In 2019 the building is called Mering House (ComMaps).

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

Godfrey and Spowers was established in c1901 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 bank building designs.

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 c1934. 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





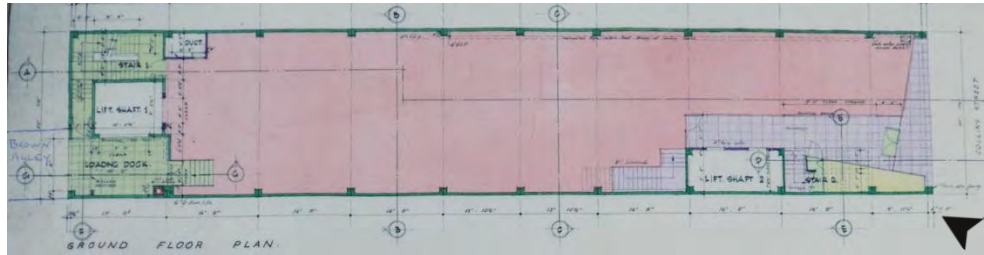


Figure 3. Ground floor plan, Collins Street at right. Drawing by Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, in association with Charles N Hollinshed, dated April 1956 (BAP).

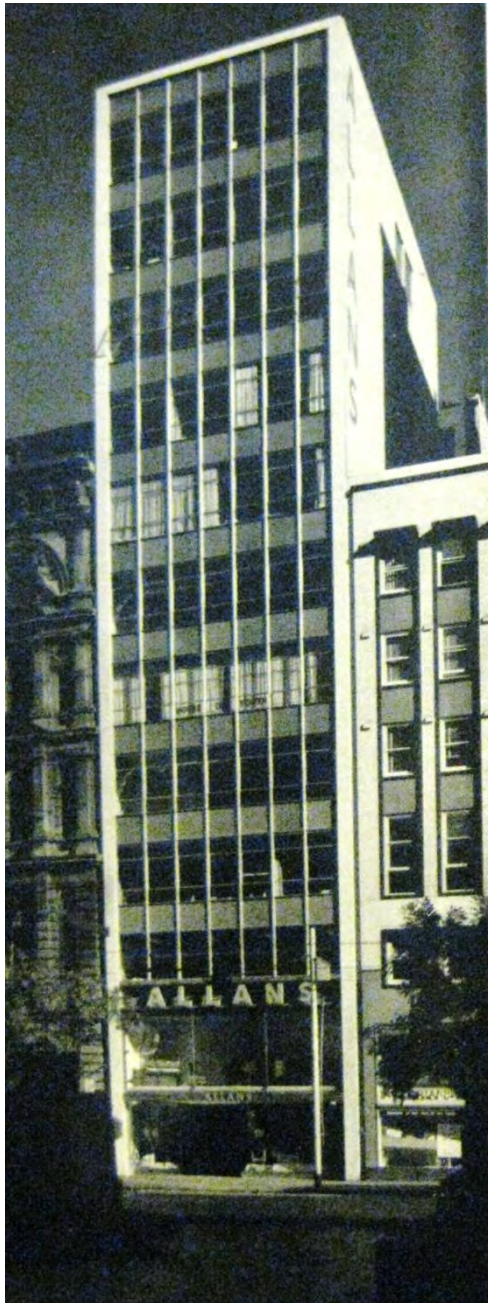


Figure 4. Allans Building, photo published in 1959 (Saunders, 1959:90).

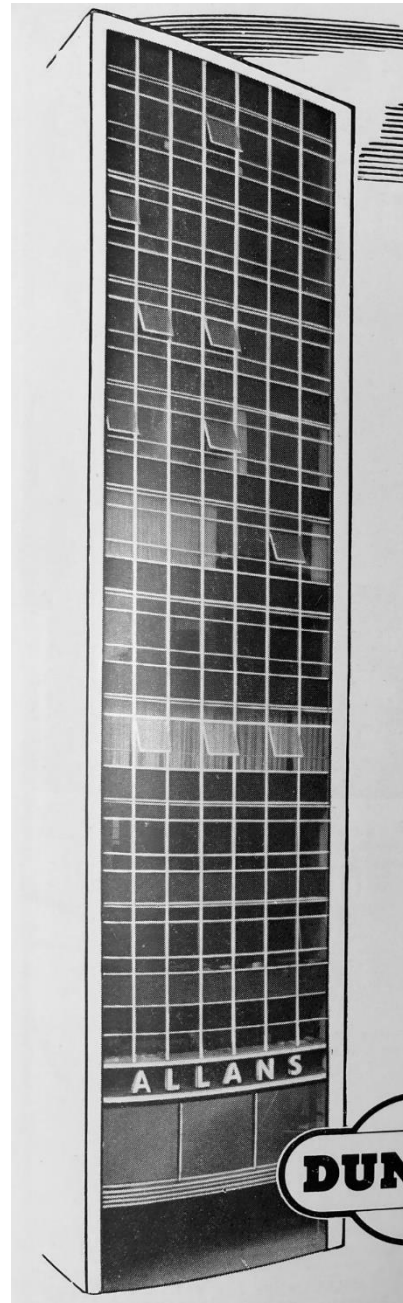


Figure 5. Illustration of the newly completed building published in *Architecture in Australia* in March 1960, advertising Dunlop Rubber Flooring, used throughout the building (AIA, Mar 1960:9).





Figure 6. Photo of the completed building published in *Architecture in Australia* in December 1959.



Figure 7. Allans Music store in 1982 (City of Melbourne Libraries online Heritage Collection, Graeme Butler, photographer, Reference no. Butler16369).

## SITE DESCRIPTION

The Former Allans Building at 276-278 Collins Street is an 11-storey commercial building located on the north side of Collins Street between Elizabeth Street and Swanston Street. Constructed in 1956-57 to a design by Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, in association with Charles N Hollinshed Associates, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

Constructed on a long, narrow site, the Former Allans Building has a minimal frontage of 30 feet (9 metres) to Collins Street. Dame Edna Place provides access to the rear of the building from Little Collins Street. The adjacent building to the east partially wraps around the rear of the building and to the west is the low-rise Block Arcade building, dating from the 1890s. Located on the opposite side of Collins Street is the similarly styled Former Bank of Adelaide which was designed by the same architects as the Former Allans Building in the late 1950s.

The building is of concrete encased steel column and beam construction with the Collins Street façade presenting as a tall, narrow and transparent curtain wall of metal framing with alternating rows of glazing and opaque red spandrels (possibly glass with applied finish). The rows of glazing contain a central row (openable, reversible sashes indicated on the original drawings) which are the same height as the spandrel panels. Rows of half-sized windows above and below result in dominant bands of glazing across the façade. Together with continuous mullions which run from above street level to the top of the building, these horizontal bands form a grid-like pattern across the whole façade. Concrete side walls and crowning parapet frame the façade.

Side walls of the Former Allans Building are concrete and a large portion of the west façade is visible above the adjacent Block Arcade building. A vertical 'Allans' sign is painted on this wall, above the adjacent façade. A light court, situated on the east side of the building, provides light to the building above the second floor, while the north (rear) façade has been obscured by later building.

At street level, a double-height portion of the front façade was originally recessed behind the line of the building. This area has been extensively modified with the insertion of a glazed shopfront with fine cantilevered awning set between the original side walls.

## **INTEGRITY**

The Former Allans Building, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building, remains highly intact from its original construction in 1956-57.

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

## **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

The Former Allans Building at 276-278 Collins Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of 1950s multi-storey commercial building design. The building's transparent grid-like curtain wall façade, with alternating rows of metal-framed glazing and opaque glass spandrels and vertical mullions, can be clearly observed from Collins Street. Despite the redesign of the façade at street level, the upper facades of the Former Allans Building remain highly intact to their original design.

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

### **State-significant places**

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

### **Locally-significant places**

#### *Precinct Heritage Overlay*

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



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



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



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



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



### *Other Examples*

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



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



Former Atlas Assurance Building, 404-406 Collins Street (H Garnet Alsop & Partners, 1958-61) (Interim HO1008).



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



**Analysis**

As a fine and highly intact representative example of its type, the Former Allans Building at 276-278 Collins Street clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne. Similar to the small number of 1950s buildings presently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme – and a small number of other examples identified throughout the Hoddle Grid and listed above – the Former Allans 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*
- Architecture in Australia* (AIA): December 1959; March 1960.
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- Saunders, David A L (1959), 'Office Blocks in Melbourne' in *Architecture in Australia*, June 1959.
- The Age*.
- The Argus*.

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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** Ungraded

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**Central City Heritage  
Review 2011** Ungraded

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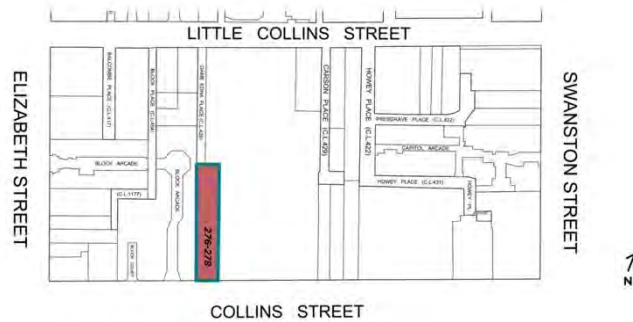


## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Former Allans Building



**PS ref no:** HO1318XXXX



### What is significant?

The Former Allans Building, 276-278 Collins Street, a multi-storey commercial building constructed in 1956-57.

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

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

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

### How it is significant?

The Former Allans Building at 276-278 Collins Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

Constructed in 1956-57, to a design by Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb in association with Charles N Hollinshed, the Former Allans Building has a clear association with the postwar building boom which transformed central Melbourne into a modern high-rise city. The design of these commercial buildings from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s – many of which were architect designed – was driven by the commercial demands and the prestige afforded by a dominant city presence (Criterion A).

The Former Allans Building has strong and enduring associations with the development of the music industry in Melbourne. The music dealership, which continuously occupied the site in Collins Street from at least 1876 to c1982, was noted as being the largest in the southern hemisphere by 1877 (Criterion A).

The Former Allans Building is a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building. The building strongly reflects the style which was popular in the 1950s, particularly in central Melbourne. Constructed to the prevailing limit-height of 40m (132 feet) at the time, the Former Allans Building clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a 1950s structure with a curtain wall façade. The transparent front façade of alternating rows of glazing and opaque glass spandrels, along vertical mullions which divide the facade into a grid-like pattern, and the use of materials such as opaque glass and metal window frames, demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style (Criterion D).

The Former Allans Building has close associations with the Allan family, headed by George Leavis Allan who worked in the music industry in Melbourne from 1853 and established the music business, Allan & Co, with his son in 1881. The Allan family owned the music business through the latter part of the nineteenth century and much of the twentieth century. The family were significant contributors to the music industry in Melbourne for over 100 years and the family name was synonymous with this industry for a long period (Criterion H).

#### **Primary source**

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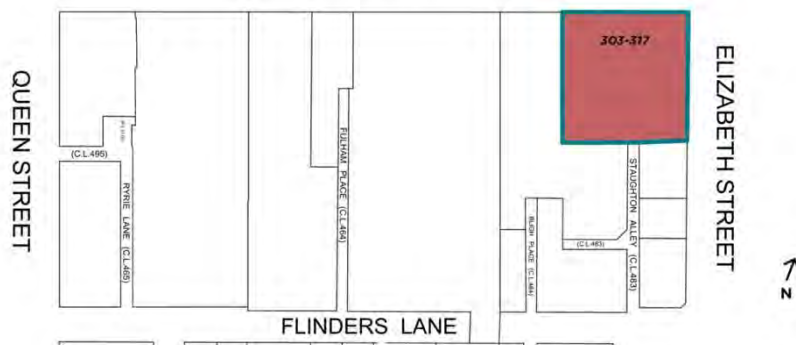
[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\)](#)~~Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020) (updated March 2022)~~



<b>SITE NAME</b>	Former MLC Building [also known as Royal Bank Plaza and IOOF Centre (current name)] ( <a href="#">Not included in a Heritage Overlay – see Addendum in Volume 1</a> )
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	303-317 Collins Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	110762



COLLINS STREET



<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>FORMER GRADE</b>	Ungraded
<b>DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:</b>	Civil and Civic Pty Ltd in association with Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton	<b>BUILDER:</b>	Civil and Civic Pty Ltd
<b>DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b>	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	<b>DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:</b>	c1970 - 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	Retail, Workshop, Office, Café/Restaurant, Studio, Medical, Education, Caretaker, Carrier
1920s	Workshop, Office, Retail, Hairdresser, Café/Restaurant, Storage, Studio, Carrier, Retail, Caretaker, Trade
1960s	Café/Restaurant, Office, Retail, Studio, Medical, Hairdresser, Merchant, Carrier, Retail/Workshop, Caretaker

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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

**Extent of overlay:** To extent of property boundary

## SUMMARY

The building at 303-317 Collins Street, on the south-west corner of Collins and Elizabeth streets, was completed in 1973 as the Melbourne headquarters of the Mutual Life and Citizens Assurance Company Pty Ltd (MLC). Design co-ordination, construction and mechanical and electrical engineering of the building was carried out by Civil and Civic Pty Ltd (the design and construction subsidiary of Lend Lease Corporation Ltd) with architects in association being R. S. Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton.



## 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 MLC Building, on the south-west corner of Collins and Elizabeth streets, was completed in 1973 for the Mutual Life and Citizens Assurance Company Pty Ltd (MLC) who redeveloped their site, replacing the earlier Melbourne headquarters for the company on the site (*Age*, 13 Aug 1973:17; *Telegraph*, 30 Mar 1937:8; *Construction*, 29 Mar 1939:6; BAF).

MLC acquired the corner property in 1936, occupying an earlier building on the site from 1938. The company temporarily relocated to the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street in 1969 (which they had previously occupied between 1911 and 1938) during redevelopment of the subject site (*Age*, 13 Aug 1973:17, 21; S&Mc).

The insurance company MLC was established in Victoria in 1888 as The Citizens' Life Assurance Company, providing life assurance with low premiums to the working man. Previously, life assurance benefits were restricted to the wealthy in Victoria. The company grew rapidly, taking over the Mutual Life Association of Australasia in 1908 and the Australian Widow's Fund Life Assurance Society in 1910. The company became the Mutual Life and Citizens Assurance Company Pty Ltd. By the 1970s there were 19 district and sales offices throughout Victoria (*Age*, 13 Aug 1973:17). Today, MLC provides life insurance as well as investments, superannuation and financial advice to corporate, institutional and retail customers (MLC, 'About').

The City of Melbourne received a building permit application for the 30-storey office building at the site in January 1970 (BAI; BAF). Design co-ordination, construction and mechanical and electrical engineering of the building was carried out by Civil and Civic Pty Ltd (the design and construction subsidiary of Lend Lease Corporation Ltd). The architects in association were R. S. Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton (Goad 2012:199; BAP). In August 1973 *The Age* published a feature on the newly completed building, reporting that the architects in association were 'R S Demaine and Partners', the structural engineers were W J and W L Meinhardt and mechanical engineers in association were Rider Hunt and Partners (architectural plans record Norman & Addicoat as the latter, in 1969) (*Age*, 13 Aug 1973:17).

Architectural drawings dated 1969 show the north and south elevations and ground floor plan (Figure 1 - Figure 3). The designs included a plaza, basement car parking, ground floor shops, offices and a banking chamber, a first floor theatrette (in the circular section projecting into the plaza) and offices, a 13<sup>th</sup> floor executive level, 15<sup>th</sup> floor caretaker's flat, two plant/motor rooms, and the remainder as offices (BAF; BAP). MLC constructed a temporary building on the site to house the State Savings Bank (whose premises were acquired for the new build) until occupancy was available in the new building (BAF; *Age*, 13 Aug 1973:20).

The building was opened by Premier Rupert Hamer at a special function held on site in August 1973 (*Age*, 13 Aug 1973:17). The (almost 400ft/122m) high-rise building was completed at a total cost of \$12.5 million. A technique new to Australia, 'rock socketting' was used for the foundations. The building was constructed of precast concrete and clad with re-constituted granite panels (*Age*, 13 Aug 1973:17-21; AIA, May/June 1973). The design requested a facing that would 'produce a subdued but rugged brown effect', the response to which was a natural stone aggregate from Talbot, a mining town near Maryborough, and sandblasting techniques to expose the stone (as the semicircular shape of the building made polishing of panels impracticable). The overall result was a natural look, rather than a contrived or artificial appearance. Each panel was between 2½ to 4 inches (6.3-10cm) thick. A contemporary newspaper article stated that the 'precast cladding is also serving as external formwork, designed to withstand great pressures during placement. In this way the cladding became an integral part of the structure instead of being just "hung on."' Aggregates in the same Talbot quarts were used to finish off the ground floor columns and entrance, this applied finish being 'water washed with a fine spray and then cleaned with acid' (*Age*, 13 Aug 1973:17-21).

The completed building comprised two basements, ground and 29 upper floors, a spacious forecourt with a circular rotunda and fountain, and an 'unusual semi-circular shape with circular lift-tower at the rear' and sill-to-ceiling aluminum-framed windows on all elevations, and a theatrette. The high-rise building was also fitted with the fastest lifts in Melbourne at the time, servicing the upper floors (*Age*, 13 Aug 1973:17-21).

The MLC weather beacon from an earlier MLC building – reportedly a 'long feature of Melbourne life' – was relocated to the top of the new building. Operated remotely by the Weather Bureau, the beacon provided weather updates and forecasts (*Age*, 13 Aug 1973:19).

An image (appears to be a photo montage prior to completion) of the building was published in *The Age* in 1972 (31 Jul 1972:37), requesting occupants for 'The MLC Building', 'Melbourne's outstanding new office building' (Figure 5). 'The MLC Building' at 303-317 Collins Street was advertised in August 1973 as 'Melbourne's newest prestige office building' by leasing agents George G Henderson (*Age*,

13 Aug 1973:21). Photos published during this period showed the original entrance and forecourt area (Figure 4 – Figure 5).

In 2012, the building was referred to as Royal Bank Plaza (Goat 2012:199). MLC sold the property in 2017 (MLC). A low-scale addition has been constructed in front of the building, extending to the Collins and Elizabeth street boundaries (post-1984), and is occupied by Westpac in 2019. In 2019 the name of the building is the IOOF Centre (CoMMaps); the top of the weather beacon bears the name 'IOOF'.

#### **Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, architects**

Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton was established in 1957, originating from the private practice of architect Robert Snowden Demaine in 1937. Demaine acted as caretaker for a number of Melbourne practices during World War II while their directors were involved in the war effort and gained considerable experience in hospital and industrial architectural design. Demaine was instrumental in advocating for the establishment of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects (RVIA) Small Homes Service in 1947 and served as RVIA president in 1945 and RAI national president in 1952-54.

Ailsa Merle Trundle joined the firm as junior partner in 1943, forming Demaine, Russell and Trundle alongside Arthur Leslie Russell, who specialised in hospital design. Trundle, born in Murwillumbah, NSW began her architectural studies through the Bendigo School of Mines, followed by study at the Gordon Institute at Geelong and the University of Melbourne's Architectural Atelier (MUAA). One of the first women to be offered a named partnership in an Australian architectural firm, she was responsible for much of the firm's welfare work, including buildings for the Autistic Children's Association (Black Rock, Mansfield and Bayswater), and the Dalkeith Home for the Aged, Traralgon.

In 1957, the firm amalgamated with the existing firm of Armstrong and Orton to become Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton. Lloyd Orton was educated at the Melbourne Technical College and the University of Melbourne and travelled to Europe on a scholarship after WWII. On his return to Melbourne in 1951 he co-founded the firm of Armstrong & Orton with young designer, Anthony Brown Armstrong.

Notable postwar buildings in central Melbourne designed by Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton include BP House on Albert Road, Melbourne (1962-4), the Naval and Military Club, Little Collins Street, Melbourne (1967) and the MLC Building, Collins Street, Melbourne (c1970-1973) in association with Civil and Civic Pty Ltd. The firm also designed three red-brick Brutalist buildings for the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT, buildings 51, 56 and 57) in the 1970s.

The firm continues to practise as Demaine Partnership.



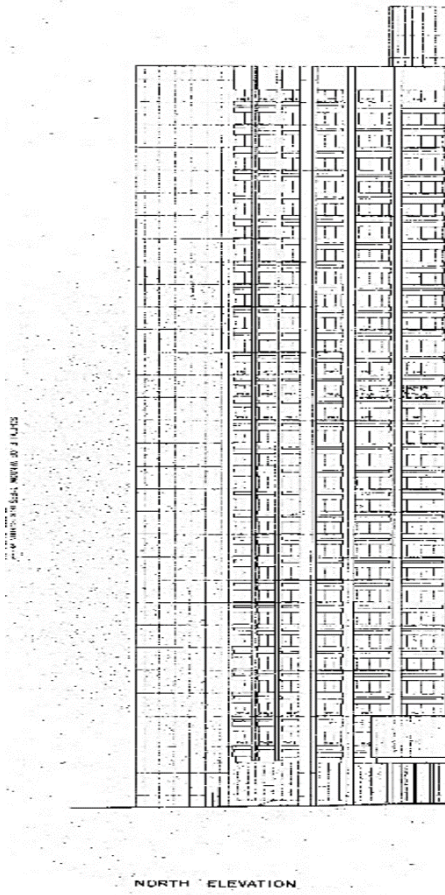


Figure 1. Architectural drawing of the north elevation, dated 1969 (BAP).

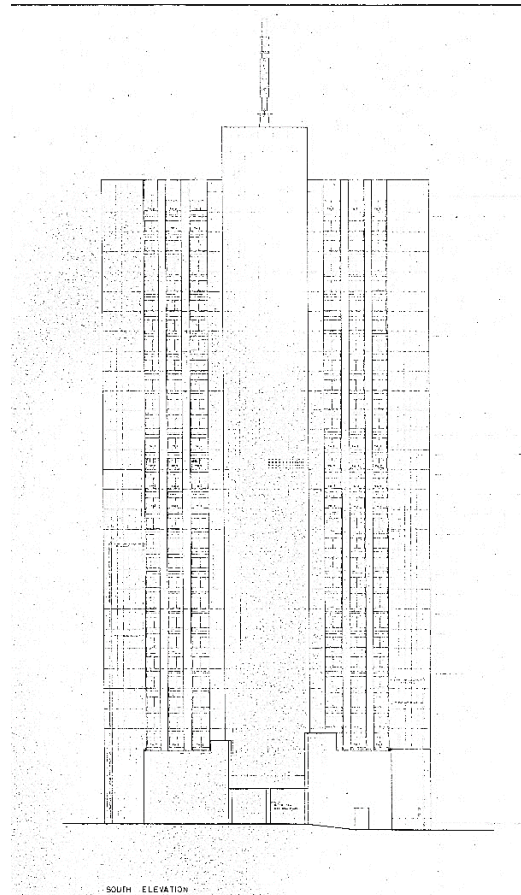


Figure 2. Architectural drawing of the south elevation, dated 1969 (BAP).

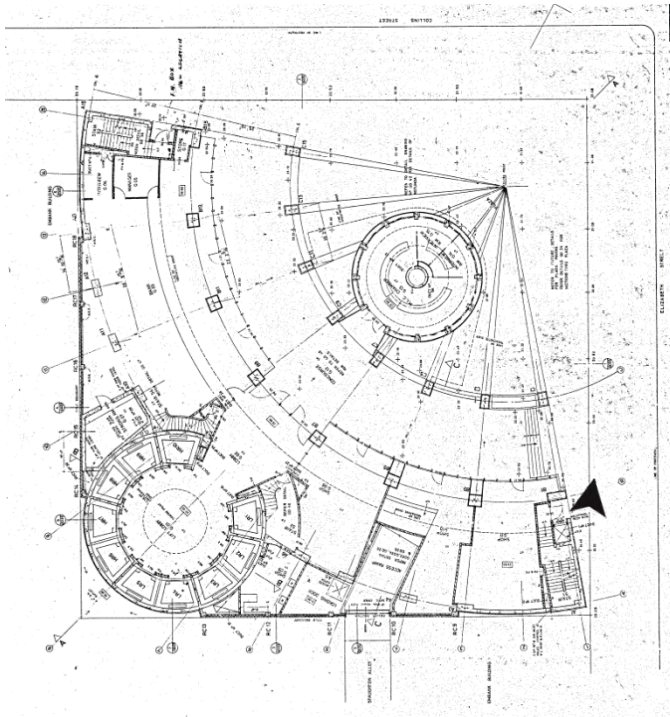


Figure 3. Ground floor plan, drawing dated 1969 (BAP).



Figure 4. Photo of the building published in the May/June edition of *Architecture in Australia* (AIA, May/June 1973:8).



Figure 5. An image of the newly completed building published in *The Age* in July 1972 (*Age*, 31 Jul 1972:37).

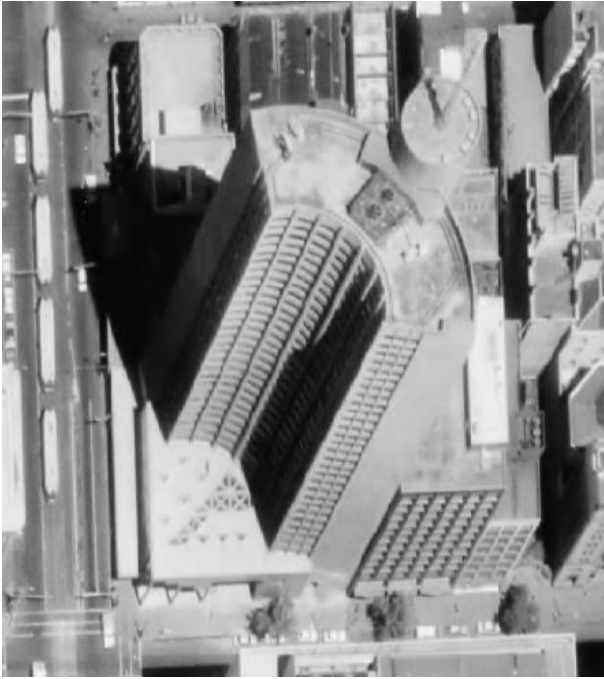


Figure 6. An oblique aerial of the building in 1987, showing the weather beacon (Landata Victoria).

### SITE DESCRIPTION

The Former MLC Building at 303-317 Collins Street is a 30-storey commercial building located at the south-west corner of Collins and Elizabeth streets. Completed in 1973 to a design by Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

The building is of unusual quadrant form, with the focal point near the main Collins and Elizabeth street intersection. A circular lift tower is located at the rear of the building and a low-rise forecourt, extending to both street fronts, has replaced an original forecourt rotunda. Adjacent buildings in both Collins and Elizabeth streets are low-rise and therefore the subject building is visible from a number of directions. Staughton Alley provides access to the south side of the building from Flinders Lane.

The building is of reinforced concrete column and slab construction, with the structure clearly expressed on the highly visible concave front facade. External precast concrete cladding, faced with thick granite panels with sandblasted finish, is an integral part of the structure as it served as external formwork.

The concave front façade of the building is articulated with vertical stone-clad piers which rise to the apex of the building. Alternating rows of aluminium framed fixed windows and stone-clad spandrels are set behind these piers with a crowning solid band above. Alternating bands of windows and spandrels are repeated across parts of the other three facades, with the exception of solid stone-clad panels which enclose internal access stairs at the rear corners of the building and the circular lift well at the centre of the rear convex façade.

At the corner of Collins and Elizabeth streets the building has been substantially altered at ground level with the removal of the original entrance rotunda and replacement with a low-scale building which extends across the curved front façade of the multi-storey building, obscuring the lower façade. Extending to the Collins and Elizabeth street boundaries, this is a partially glazed and panelled pavilion with a combination of column and pier supports and cantilever verandah with deep fascia.

## INTEGRITY

The Former MLC Building, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building above street level, remains highly intact to its original construction in c1970-73. Works to the building at the Collins and Elizabeth street corner, including demolition of the forecourt rotunda and construction of a low-scale forecourt building which extends to both street boundaries, has altered the original design at street level.

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

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The Former MLC Building at 303-317 Collins Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of a 1960s to mid 1970s multi-storey office building design. Located on a prominent site, the building's grid-like walls of clearly expressed structure, clad with precast granite-faced concrete panels, can be clearly observed from many directions. The curved form of the building is highly unusual and distinctive. Despite demolition of the original forecourt rotunda, and construction of a low-rise forecourt which extends to both Collins and Elizabeth street frontages, the upper curved facades of the Former MLC Building remain highly intact to their original design.

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

### State-significant places

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

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

### Locally-significant places

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

*Precinct Heritage Overlay*





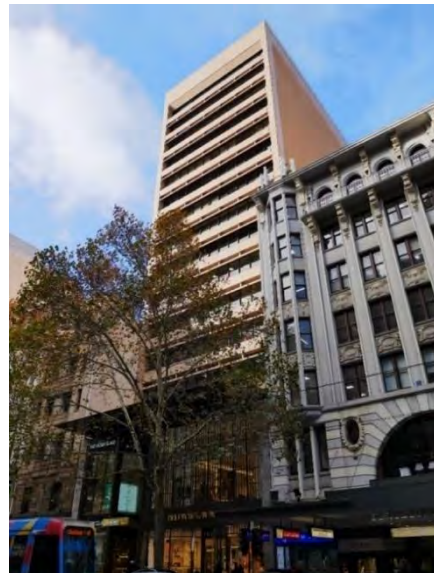
Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



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



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



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

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





Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

#### *Other examples*

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



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



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



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



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



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)



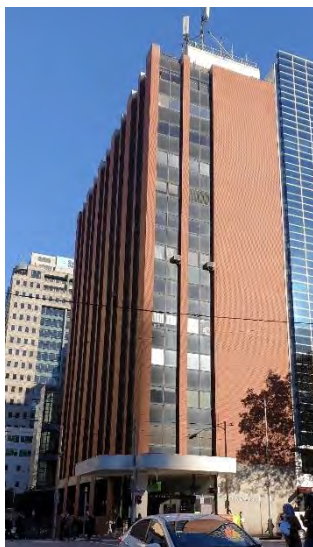
Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William Street  
(Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)



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)



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



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 MLC Building clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey commercial buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne. Similar to a number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings listed above, the subject building clearly demonstrates this class of place.

**ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA**

✓	<p><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*

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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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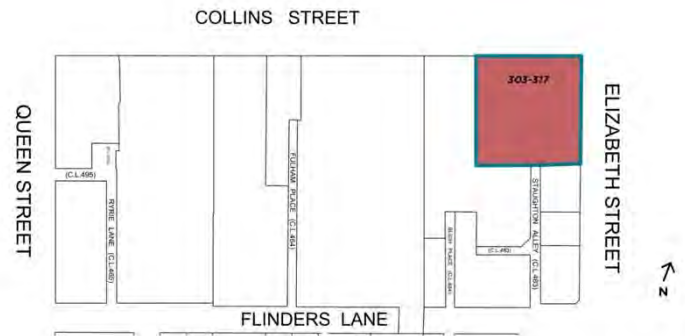


## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Former MLC Building



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



### What is significant?

The Former MLC Building, 303-317 Collins Street, a multi-storey office building constructed in 1970-73.

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 high level of integrity to its original design.

Later additions made to the forecourt are not significant.

### How it is significant?

The Former MLC Building at 303-317 Collins Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

Constructed c1970-73 to a design by Civil and Civic Pty Ltd in association with Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, the Former MLC Building has a clear association with the postwar building boom which transformed central Melbourne into a modern high-rise city. The design of these commercial buildings from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s – many of which were architect designed – was driven by the commercial demands and the prestige afforded by a dominant city presence (Criterion A).

The Former MLC 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 from the 1960s to the mid 1970s, particularly in central Melbourne. Constructed as a 30-storey structure, the Former MLC Building clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a later postwar commercial building including

grid-like walls of clearly expressed structure, and the use of materials such as granite-faced precast concrete panel cladding. These demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style. The adoption of a curved form to clearly display the trabeated system of construction is unusual and distinctive (Criterion D).

**Primary source**

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

**SITE NAME** Former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Building and plaza with 'Children's Tree' Sculpture

**STREET ADDRESS** 308-336 Collins Street, Melbourne

**PROPERTY ID** 102137



**SURVEY DATE:** October 2018

**SURVEY BY:** Context

**HERITAGE INVENTORY** Not provided

**EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY** No

**PLACE TYPE** Individual Heritage Place

**PROPOSED CATEGORY** Significant

**FORMER GRADE** C

**DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:** Stephenson & Turner (building)  
Tom Bass (sculpture)

**BUILDER:** Not known

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

**DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:** 1963

## THEMES

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

## LAND USE

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

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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

**Extent of overlay:** Refer to map

## SUMMARY

The former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Building at 308-336 Collins Street, opened in 1963. It was designed by architects Stephenson & Turner and constructed by Lewis Construction Co Pty Ltd. The building was set back to create a 'pedestrian precinct' and a commissioned sculpture by artist Tom Bass, 'Children's Tree' was installed in the forecourt of the building facing Elizabeth Street as part of the design.

## CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

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

### Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

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

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

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

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



### **Beyond the curtain wall**

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

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

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

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

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

### **Business and finance in the postwar period**

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

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

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

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

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

## **SITE HISTORY**

Prior to the present building, the subject site on the key city corner of Elizabeth and Collins streets was occupied by the Equitable Building, built between 1891 and 1896 (MV 2018a) (see Figure 1). The Equitable Life Assurance Society (USA) paid £360,000 for the site in 1890, towards the end of the economic boom of the 1880s (MV 2018a). The Equitable Life Assurance Society had wanted to build 'the grandest building in the Southern Hemisphere', and commissioned the large structure to a design by American architect, Edward Raht. The building was constructed by David Mitchell (MV 2018a) and the Equitable Life Assurance Society owned the building until 1923, when it sold it to the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society (MV 2018a).

The Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society was founded in Melbourne in 1873, and by 1874 had established offices in other Australian cities. Offices in British colonial outposts, such as New Zealand and South Africa, followed (MV 2018b). By the late 1950s, new headquarters were required by the Society. Consequently, the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society demolished the Equitable Building at the corner of Elizabeth and Swanston streets and constructed the current office block (MV 2018b). Parts of the old Equitable Building can be found in various locations around Melbourne, with Harcourt granite blocks situated outside the Melbourne Museum, and the statuary above the portico moved to the grounds of the University of Melbourne (MV 2018a).

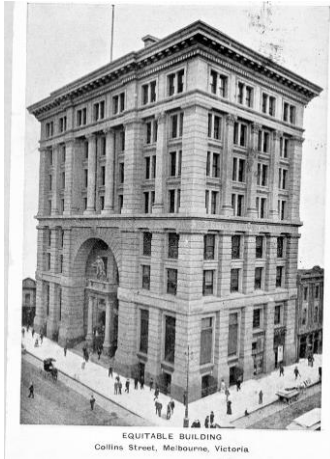


Figure 1. The Equitable Building, which stood on the subject site (Source: General sequence postcard 1906, SLV)

Construction started on the existing building on the subject site in 1959, with the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance building opening in 1963 (MBAI 33728; Sievers 1963, SLV). Gold lettering on both the Elizabeth and Collins street facades of the building promoted the company's name. Stephenson & Turner were the architects for the building, which was constructed by Lewis Construction Co Pty Ltd (*Cross-Section* 1963:np).

The *Cross-Section* architecture journal described the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance building in December 1963:

*[The building] is conservatively clad, in panels of cream travertine Italian marble, grey Harcourt (Vic.) granite and black Imperial (S.A.) granite. The C.M.L. building sits back 20 ft from the Elizabeth Street frontage, providing the currently conventional street-side pedestrian precinct...The pavement space outside the C.M.L. is yet to be enlivened by a Tom Bass sculpture...On the skyline, the C.M.L. building fits into place without looking like a raw and independent intrusion...C.M.L. cost approx. £3 million. Construction: rigid steel frame. 21 floors above ground, 3 basements. Air conditioned (Cross-Section 1963:np).*

The building was set back, which allowed for a 'pedestrian precinct' and the installation of a Tom Bass sculpture in the forecourt of the building facing Elizabeth Street (National Trust 2014) (see Figure 2 and Figure 3). The Bass sculpture in the forecourt, installed by 18 December 1963, is known as 'Children's Tree' and was commissioned by the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society as part of the site design (*Canberra Times* 18 December 1963:35). Tom Bass later evaluated the work as follows.

Another really important part of my work has been children's sculpture...The next thing that came along was the Children's Tree in Melbourne. I had been asked by an insurance company to do a sculpture for a space that had been created in the forecourt of their new building, right in the heart of the city...When they first said they wanted a children's sculpture there, I thought how inappropriate it was to have something for children in such a busy, noisy place. But...the more I worked on it the more realised how important it was to create this little incident in the heart of a great bustling city that would remind people of their childhood. It would also be where children brought into the city could find

some little thing that related to them. So, again, I was really drawn into it and had a thoroughly marvellous experience doing it (Bass and Smart 2006:108-109).

The building was refurbished in 2003, and this is presumably when substantial alterations to the façade were made (CoMMaps).



Figure 2. The subject building not long after completion. (Source: Sievers 1963, SLV copyright)



Figure 3. A view of the statue and building behind it. (Source: Sievers 1963, SLV copyright)

#### *Tom Bass, sculptor*

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).

#### *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 & 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) (Willis 2012).*

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

308-336 Collins Street, Melbourne is a 19-storey concrete and steel building built 1959-63 in the Post-War Modernist style. It exhibits key characteristics of the style, particularly the use of a steel and reinforced-concrete frame allowing for its great height at the time, distinct double height base in a contrasting material and set back shopfronts to create an undercroft. Positioned on the north-west corner of Collins Street and Elizabeth Street, the building is set back from Elizabeth Street to create a small publicly accessible plaza. The building has a narrow frontage to Elizabeth Street, but is on a deep block that extends a considerable distance along Collins Street.

Above the ground level the primary façade facing Collins Street is divided into sixteen equal vertical bays providing a regular grid of windows. Four more identical vertical bays complete the eastern elevation facing Elizabeth Street reinforcing the cubiform massing of the building. The windows are framed in natural aluminium with a central mullion. It is unclear if these are original or have been replaced, but the original pattern of two vertically proportioned sashes for each module is retained.

The building was refurbished in 2003 which included the re-cladding of the facade in an aluminium cladding system, replacing the original panels of cream travertine Italian marble and grey Harcourt granite. This has resulted in the building losing some of the original design refinement of the structural grid, especially the prominence of the projecting vertical elements. Notwithstanding this the original character of the building resulting from its cubiform massing, structural grid and regular pattern of windows remains clearly legible.

At the ground and first floor level the original form of the building remains largely unaltered.-A simple rectangular pattern etched into the granite is evident in the spandrel above the shop fronts along both Collins and Elizabeth streets, which is original. The windows at the first-floor level are natural aluminium framed and appear original. At the ground level the shop fronts were originally set back from the street to provide an undercroft as the building had no awning at street level. The shop fronts have been replaced and brought forward to be in line with the building's façade above. A continuous



awning has been added to the Collins Street façade. Along Elizabeth Street a smaller cantilevered awning has been added and provides some shelter to the plaza space.

The Tom Bass sculpture known as 'Children's Tree' was commissioned by the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society in 1963 specifically for the plaza of the building at 308-336 Collins Street. It remains in its original setting, located close to the two pedestrian crossings at the intersection of Collins and Elizabeth streets. The bronze sculpture displays two children around a small, leafy tree: a girl holds a doll and a boy kneels to have a closer look at a lizard at the base of the tree. On top of the tree is an owl overlooking passersby.

### **INTEGRITY**

308-336 Collins Street is generally intact with some changes visible to original or early fabric. Alterations include the recladding of the building above street level with an aluminium cladding system and the replacement of shopfronts, bringing them forward to be in line with the building above. At the ground and first floor level the original form of the building remains with its original granite cladding and what appear to be original aluminium framed windows. The plaza has been retained, although its extension into the building's undercroft has been lost. The Tom Bass sculpture 'Children's Tree' remains in its original location within the forecourt.

The building's original built form, scale, some evidence of its original materials and key stylistic details remain clearly legible.

### **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

The former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Building and plaza 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.

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 Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Building. These are detailed below.

#### **State-significant places**

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

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

#### **Locally-significant places**

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

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

*Precinct Heritage Overlay*



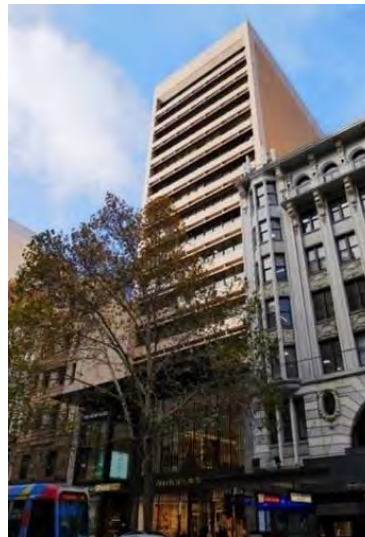
Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



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



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



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

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



Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

#### *Other examples*

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



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



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





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



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



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



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



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



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



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)



Royal Insurance Group Building, 430-442 Collins Street (Yunken Freeman, 1966)

### Public artworks

Within the Hoddle Grid, the following public artworks are comparable to the Tom Bass 1963 'Children's Tree' sculpture, in terms of the medium, setting or time period:

*Hosie's Hotel Mural, 1-5 Elizabeth Street, 1955 (VHR H2094; HO938 – mural only)*

Hosie's Hotel Mural, at the corner of Elizabeth and Flinders streets, was created in 1955. Richard Beck (1912-1985), an English and German trained graphic designer and one of the leading modernist graphic designers in Melbourne at the time, was commissioned to create a mural for the new Hosie's Hotel. The Hosie's Hotel Mural is of historic importance for its connection to the modernist movement in architecture and design in Melbourne. At this time, modernism was important as the city of Melbourne attempted to present itself to the world as a modern, contemporary city at the time of the 1956 Olympic Games. The re-building of Hosie's Hotel was an expression of a desire to provide modern hotel accommodation and the inclusion of the mural in the overall design of the building demonstrates the desire to appear modern.



Hosies Hotel Mural, built in 1955.

*Former Sleigh Corner Building with 'Transformation', 158-164 Queen Street, 1964 (Recommended as individually significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review)*

The former Sleigh Corner Building (now known as Elders House), at 158-164 Queen Street, is a 15-storey postwar pre-cast concrete and steel curtain wall corner commercial office building. It was constructed in 1964 to a design by Bates Smart & McCutcheon for H C Sleigh Ltd. It is a fine example of the postwar International style. It has a narrow frontage to Queen Street and deeper frontage to Bourke Street. The building retains its original plaza with sculpture 'Transformation' created by sculptor Tom Bass.



158-164 Queen Street and 'Transformation', built in 1964. (Source: Context 2019)

*St James, 527-555 Bourke Street with 'Awakening', 1969*

A site with two building properties. Designed in the International style by the New York company Skidmore Owings & Merrill LLP in partnership with Bates Smart & McCutcheon and built in 1969. The sculpture 'Awakening' by the internationally renowned sculptor, Clement Meadmore, partially encloses the space to the east, complementing the architecture and providing a human scale.



Tower at 535 Bourke Street and 'Awakening' by Clement Meadmore, built in 1969.

*Former Shell House, 1 Spring Street, 1985-89 (VHR H2356; HO1235)*

1 Spring Street, Melbourne comprises a 28-storey office tower and northern podium, main foyer with Arthur Boyd mural 'Bathers and Pulpit Rock', and external plazas including a large external plaza at the Spring Street corner containing the Charles O Perry sculpture 'Shell Mace'. The building was originally known as Shell House (VHD Place ID 197961; CoMMaps).



1 Spring Street and 'Shell Mace' by Charles O Perry, built in 1985-89.

**Analysis**

The former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Building and plaza compares with the above examples of Post-War Modernist style office buildings built from the 1960s to the mid 1970s. The subject building is a generally intact example of the type, demonstrating the key characteristics such as the use of steel and reinforced concrete frame and non-loadbearing glazed façade system. Eagle House at 473 Bourke Street (VHR H1806), Reserve Bank of Australia at 60 Collins Street (Contributory in HO504 Collins East Precinct) generally compare with the subject building, sharing similar design aspects of the postwar period.

The former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Building and plaza is an important, and increasingly rare, example within the Hoddle Grid of a postwar office site on a major corner location, where the original



configuration of the publicly accessible open plaza has been retained. Most other examples in Melbourne that retain their original plaza setting are located outside of the Hoddle Grid, such as the Victorian State Offices at 1 Macarthur Street and 1 Treasury Place (VHR H1526), which also has a forecourt plaza with the building set back from the street. The subject site is distinguished by its siting on a prestigious corner location with an intact open plaza.

The site is also notable among its contemporaries for the sculpture 'Children's Tree', created by important sculptor Tom Bass, in the plaza. As an artwork exposed to general public within the busy central Melbourne area, it is comparable to the Hosie's Hotel Mural, in that both were created during the postwar era. As a three-dimensional sculpture included in the design for an overall building scheme, St James with 'Awakening' at 527-555 Bourke Street and the former Sleigh Corner Building with 'Transformation' at 158-164 Queen Street (both recommended as individually significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review) are comparable to the subject site.

**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** C

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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

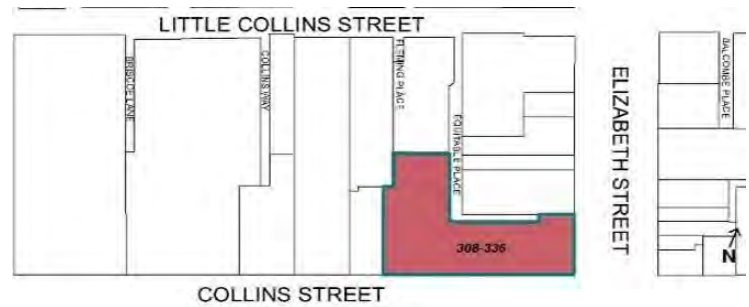
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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society Building with Plaza and 'Children's Tree' sculpture



**PS ref no:** HO [1320XXXX](#)



### What is significant?

The former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society building, built in 1959-63 to a design by Stephenson & Turner, and publicly accessible plaza with bronze 'Children's Tree' sculpture, created in 1963 by Tom Bass at 308-336 Collins Street, Melbourne, is significant.

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

- [Original building form and scale](#);
- [Original publicly accessible plaza setting with bronze 'Children's Tree' sculpture, created in 1963 by Tom Bass](#);
- [Original pattern of fenestrations](#); ~~and~~
- [Original double height building base with granite cladding and aluminium windows](#).

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

### How it is significant?

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The former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society Building with Plaza and 'Children's Tree' sculpture at 308-336 Collins Street is of local historic, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

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The former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society building, constructed in 1959-63 to a design by Stephenson & Turner, for the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society (founded in Melbourne in 1873), is significant as part of the post-World War Two development and the rapid growth of the corporate architecture of the 1950s-1970s. Its development reflected the expansion of large national and international companies opting for construction and naming rights of new city office buildings as a form of promotion and fund investment. The former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance building is significant historically as a reflection of the growth of insurance and assurance companies in Victoria during the 1950s-60s resulting in many company-named buildings being commissioned and constructed. (Criterion A)

The former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society building and plaza is also historically significant as an example of a postwar office site that provided a publicly accessible plaza, demonstrating one of the key aspects of the postwar corporate buildings in Melbourne. Many postwar office towers also played a gallery role as sculpture, paintings and tapestries were installed in their foyers, meeting rooms and forecourts. The provision of the forecourt or plaza in the curtilages of building allotments created a specific urban form in the central city. The former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society building and plaza is an important example that still retains the ground level plaza and commissioned artwork by sculptor Tom Bass, 'Children's Tree'. (Criteria A and D)

The former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society building is a good example of post war development in central Melbourne that retains its original form, scale and characteristic stylistic details which reflect the era and original design in which it was constructed. It exhibits a design aesthetic characteristic of its type, medium/high rise commercial office buildings that combine expansive glazed panel with solid sections to achieve a distinctive expressed aesthetic. Key stylistic details include the regular grid pattern of windows above ground level and the original double height building base, clad in granite and retaining the original aluminium framed windows. It is unusual in retaining its original plaza and bronze sculpture 'Children's Tree' created in 1963 by Tom Bass specifically for this space. (Criterion D)

The bronze sculpture 'Children's Tree', created in 1963 by celebrated Australian sculptor Tom Bass, and set within its original plaza setting is aesthetically significant. The aesthetic qualities of the place are

enhanced by the incorporation of an outstanding piece of publicly accessible artwork in the plaza, which was commissioned by the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society. The sculpture and plaza were integral parts of the original design of the building at 308-336 Collins Street, by architects Stephenson & Turner. (Criterion E)

**Primary source**

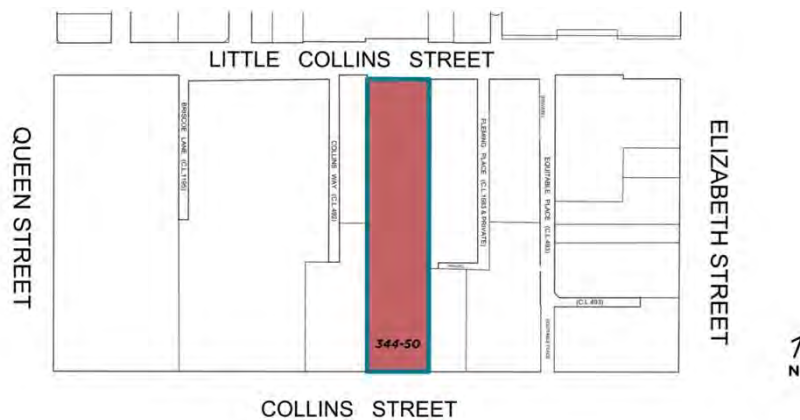
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[Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\)](#)~~Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)~~ [Hoddle Grid Heritage Review \(Context & GJM Heritage, 2020\) \(updated March 2022\)](#)





<b>SITE NAME</b>	Former AMP Building [also known as Citibank Centre (current name)]
<b>STREET ADDRESS</b>	344-350 Collins Street, Melbourne
<b>PROPERTY ID</b>	102135



**SURVEY DATE:** October 2019

**SURVEY BY:** GJM Heritage

**HERITAGE INVENTORY** No

**EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY** No

**PLACE TYPE** Individual Heritage Place

**PROPOSED CATEGORY** Significant

**FORMER GRADE** Ungraded

**DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:** Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb

**BUILDER:** E A Watts Pty Ltd

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

**DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:** 1966-1968

## 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
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Buiness and finance

## LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Retail
1920s	Retail, Workshop, Caretaker
1960s	Office, Retail

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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

**Extent of overlay:** To extent of property boundary

## SUMMARY

The multi-storey office building, extending from Collins Street to Little Collins Street, was designed by architects and engineers Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, as a rental investment for the owners, the AMP Society. The structural engineering consultants were Clive Steele Associates and builder was E A Watts Pty Ltd. The building was constructed in 1966-1968.

## 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).

### **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, extending from Collins Street to Little Collins Street, was designed by architects and engineers Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, as a rental investment for the owners, the AMP Society (BAP). The structural engineering consultants were Clive Steele Associates and builder was E A Watts Pty Ltd (BAP; *Cross-Section*, Apr 1970).

Architectural drawings dating to December 1965 and January 1966 show key floor plans and elevations (Figure 1 - Figure 3). The City of Melbourne received a building permit application for the building in July 1966 (with an estimated total value of \$5,117,800) (BAI) and construction was completed in 1968 (Figure 4). The Taxation Department occupied the building from March 1969 (*Age*, 28 Feb 1969:2; S&Mc).

The project was discussed in contemporary architectural publications. The September/October 1969 edition of *Architect* (Sep-Oct 1969:24) reported that the new design features on both the Collins and Little Collins street facades of the AMP Building included:

*... flush glazing, concealed fixing and self-draining sub-sills. Window frames and mullions both incorporate a recessed channel for terminating internal partitions. All are in Kalcolor aluminium, by Comalco. Its main façade ... has 120 double windows recessed in pre-cast concrete surrounds. A wide transom acts as a strengthening member. Light court windows*



*are fully reversible for cleaning. Fabrication and design of windows and door suites was by Perry Metal Window Company.*

In April 1970, *Cross-Section* discussed the completed building, noting that the Collins Street façade 'has a grid of precast concrete surrounds, a proportioned pattern more generously spaced and slimmer in mass than is usual in this kind of office building finish in Melbourne, perhaps more suited to the scale of a wide street' (*Cross-Section*, No. 209, Apr 1970:3).

In 2019 the building is called the Citibank Centre (ComMaps).

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

Godfrey and Spowers was established in c1901 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 bank building designs.

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 c1934. 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 (1962-65, demolished 2015) was another key work for the firm during this period.

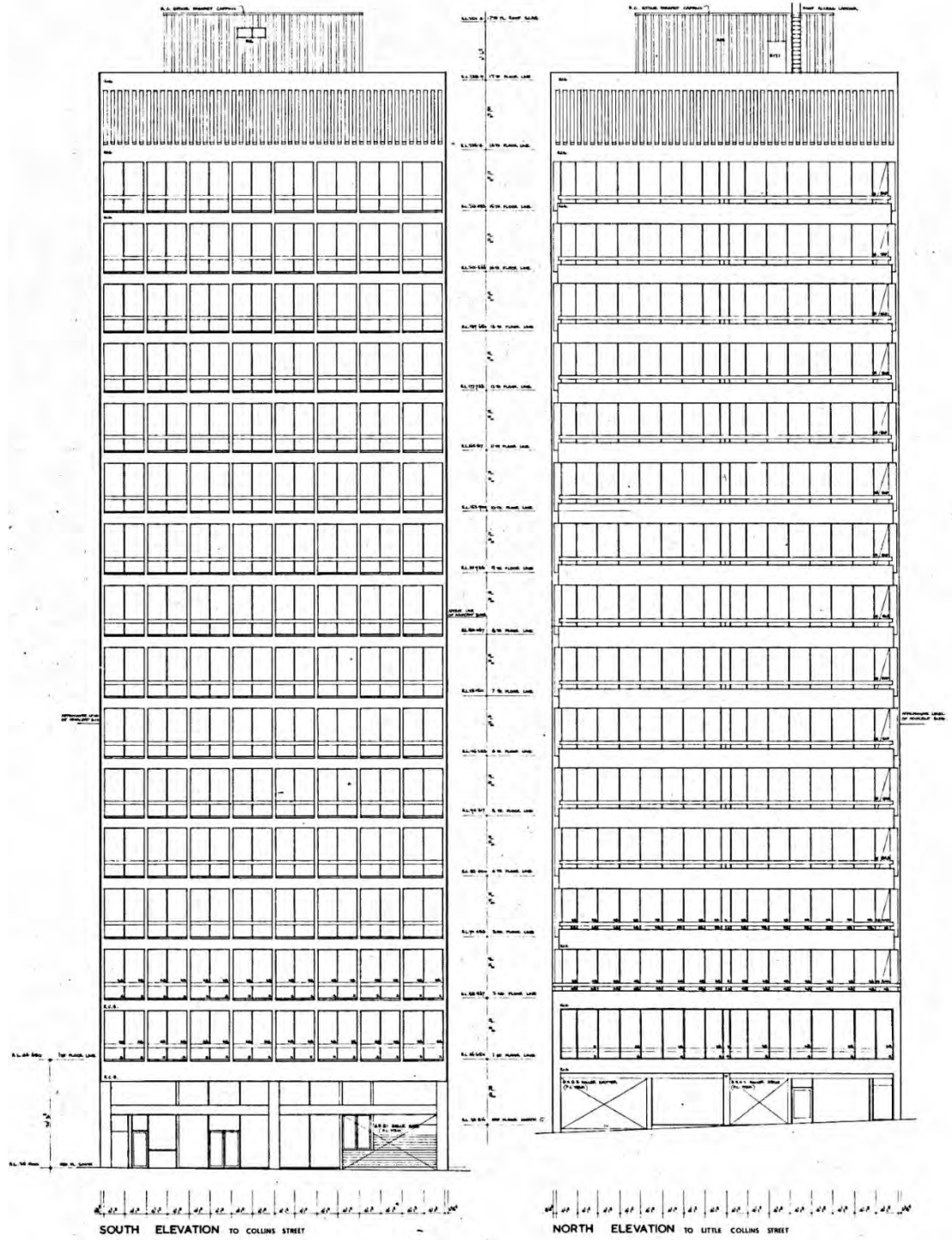


Figure 1. South (left) and north (right) elevations. Drawings by Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, dated January 1966 (BAP).

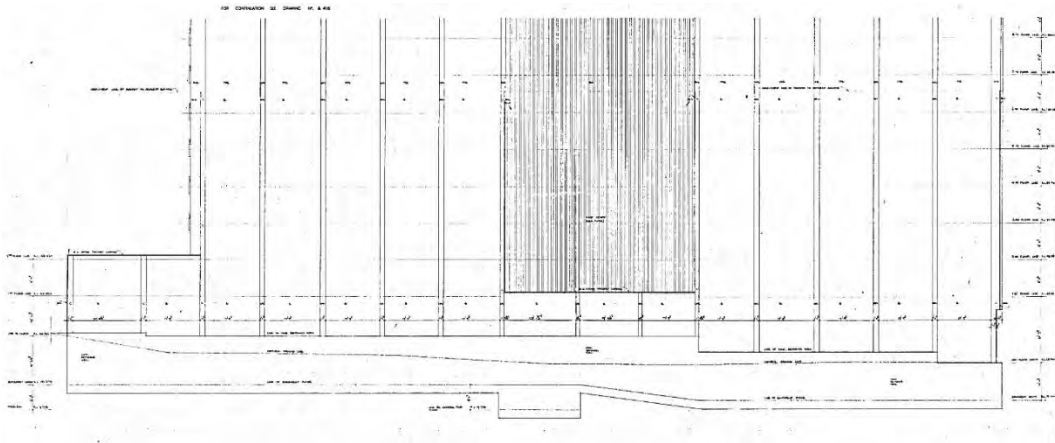


Figure 2. Lower part of the west elevation. Drawings by Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, dated January 1966 (BAP).

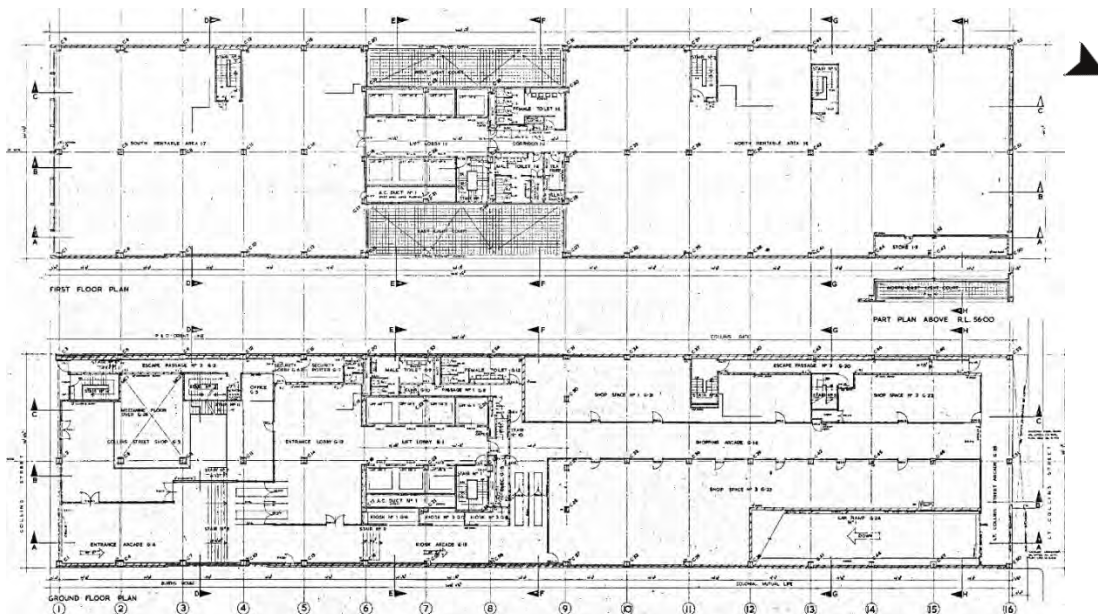


Figure 3. Ground floor plan (bottom) and first floor plan (top). Drawings by Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, dated December 1965 (BAP).





Figure 4. The newly completed building in 1968 (NLA, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, object 161643077).



Figure 5. Photo of the building published in the Sep/Oct 1969 edition of *Architect* (Sep-Oct 1969:25).



Figure 6. Photo of the Collins Street façade, published in 1970 (*Cross-Section*, No. 209, Apr 1970:3).



Figure 7. Part of the Collins Street entrance in 1975 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/88).



## SITE DESCRIPTION

The Former AMP Building at 344-350 Collins Street is a 16-storey commercial building located on the north side of Collins Street between Queen Street and Elizabeth Street. Constructed in 1966-68 to a design by architects Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

Rectangular in plan, the building has frontages to both Collins Street and Little Collins Street. The central core of the building, containing the lift lobby, is set back from adjoining buildings above the ground floor level, creating tall light wells to both the east and west sides of the building. A public car park in the basement is accessed from Little Collins Street, below a double-height podium which fronts the street.

The building is of concrete encased steel column and beam construction with brick side walls, and three internal rows of columns along the length of the building. The front façade is a grid-like curtain wall formed from generously spaced, slim precast concrete spandrels and mullions, which surround aluminium-framed glazing units with broad lower transom and fine central mullion. The rear façade faces north and incorporates rows of projecting precast concrete balconies with fine handrails, which provide some shade to the curtain wall of continuous glazing and creates a dominant horizontal emphasis. Facings to the precast concrete panels are of reconstructed stone and the same material is used to form a slotted service screen at the top floor of the building that sits flush with both the front and rear facades.

The lower Collins Street façade has been greatly modified and the original form and detailing is no longer identifiable. This includes both the ground level shopfronts and the first-floor set of windows.

## INTEGRITY

The Former AMP Building, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building above street level, remains highly intact to its original construction in 1966-68. 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 and first-floor 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 AMP Building at 344-350 Collins Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of 1960s to mid-1970s multi-storey commercial building design. This includes the contrasting fully glazed grid-like curtain walls of the front and rear facades and their associated detailing, including fine precast concrete spandrels and mullions to Collins Street and projecting precast concrete balconies which shade the continuous glazing of the rear façade. Despite modifications made to the lower two levels of the Collins Street façade, the upper facades of the Former AMP Building remain highly intact to their original design and can be clearly observed from Collins Street and Little Collins Street.

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

### State-significant places

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

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

### Locally-significant places

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

#### *Precinct Heritage Overlay*



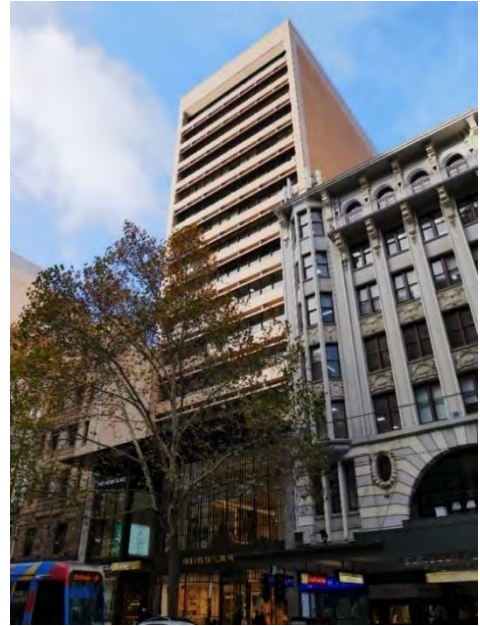
Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.



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



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



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

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



Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

#### *Other examples*

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





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



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



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



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



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



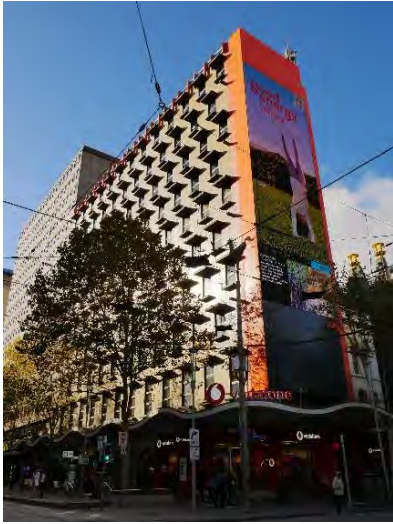
Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building, 155-161 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961-62)



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)



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



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)