Attachment 1

Agenda item 6.4a

Future Melbourne Committee

2 December 2014

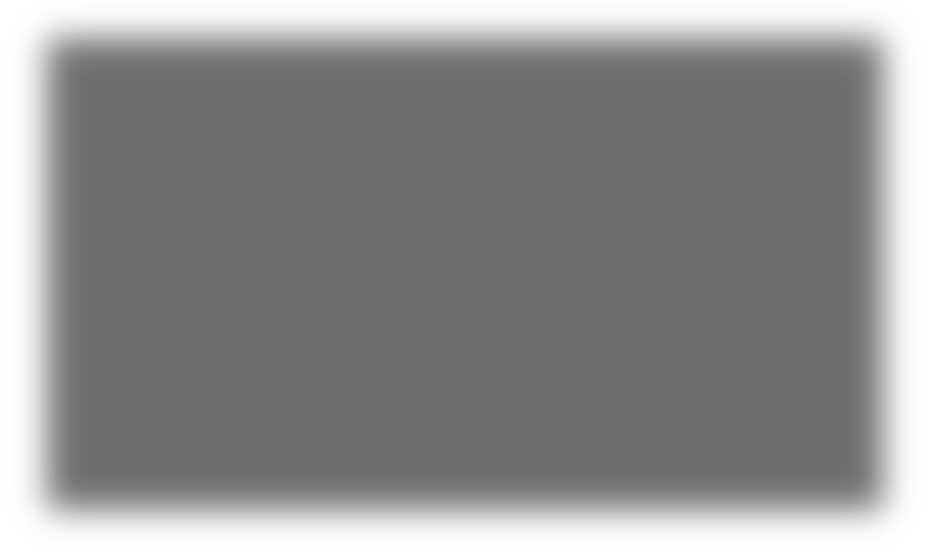
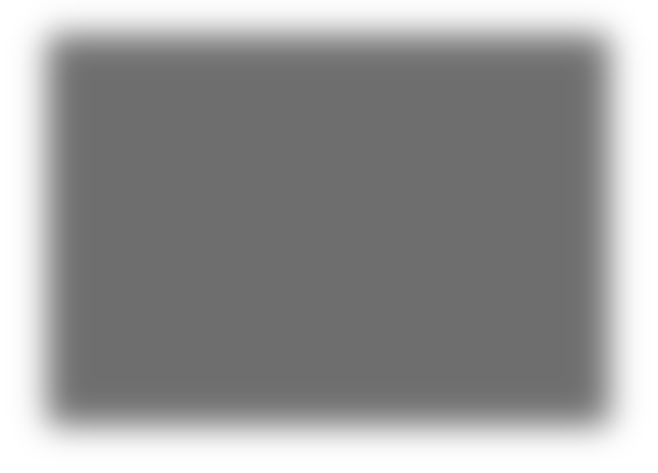
Palace Theatre, Bourke street, Melbourne:

revised heritage assessment for the City of

Melbourne December 2014

**Figure 1 Palace, early 20th century**

**Figure 2 Palace, late 20th century**



Revised heritage assessment of the Palace Theatre, Bourke Street, Melbourne

**Contents**

**Preamble .........................................................................................................................................................3**

Recent demolition of interior ........................................................................................................................ 3

City of Melbourne project management ....................................................................................................... 3

**Heritage assessment methodology ..................................................................................................................3**

Heritage Council decision 2014...................................................................................................................... 4

Methodology details ...................................................................................................................................... 5

Methodology details ...................................................................................................................................... 5

Comparative analysis ..................................................................................................................................... 5

**Revised study findings .....................................................................................................................................6**

Development summary of the Palace Theatre and its site, with associated fabric ........................................... 8

Statement of Significance................................................................................................................................. 14

How is it significant? .................................................................................................................................... 14

Why is it significant? .................................................................................................................................... 14

Existing heritage control .................................................................................................................................. 15

**Recommendations......................................................................................................................................... 16**

Graeme Butler & Associates December 2014: 2

**Preamble**

A brief heritage assessment was requested by the City of Melbourne October 2014, partly as a result of a Victorian Heritage Council hearing 2013 to ascertain potential registration of the Palace Theatre. One finding of the Heritage Council executive report was that the place was of local significance and thus had potential to be included in the heritage overlay under the *Melbourne Planning*

*Scheme, clause 43.01.*

Graeme Butler & Associates produced a heritage assessment report, *Palace Theatre, Bourke street, Melbourne: heritage assessment for the City of Melbourne*

*2014* (29 Nov 2014)and submitted the report to the City of

Melbourne.

The report recommended heritage protection of the building in the *Melbourne Planning Scheme* as locally significant, largely concurring with the findings of the Victorian Heritage Council (see *Decision of the Heritage Council,* 3 July 2014).

**Recent demolition of interior**

The October heritage assessment recommended heritage control of specified parts of the interior but inspection of the theatre December 2014 has revealed that most of the

original plaster ornamentation, glazed stair tiling and period joinery inspected in October have been removed from the building. These sweeping internal changes have necessitated this review of the original findings. This review should be considered with the original *Palace Theatre, Bourke street, Melbourne: heritage assessment for the City of Melbourne 2014* (29 Nov 2014).

Note: The building is referred to in this report as the **Palace** as the name of the 1916 reconstruction that provided the underpinning fabric of all of its subsequent development eras.

**City of Melbourne project management**

**Robyn Hellman** Coordinator Local Policy Strategic

Planning: project overview.

**Dianna Siomos** Strategic Planner Strategic Planning

Project personnel

• Graeme Butler (of Graeme Butler & Associates), Heritage architect and social historian*: s*tudy coordinator, evaluation, management, assessment report, survey, and research;

**Heritage assessment methodology**

***Introduction***

The background to this heritage assessment derives from the following:

• Graeme Butler, Central Activities District Conservation Study, prepared 1985-1987 (The Palace façade was graded **D** on an A-F scale, as a

`contributory building'1),

• the *Central City Heritage Study Review* of 1993 prepared by Philip Goad, Miles Lewis, Alan Mayne, Bryce Raworth, Jeff Turnbull ((The Palace façade was upgraded to **C 2**), and

• Lovell Chen, `Heritage Appraisal, Palace Theatre,

20-30 Bourke Street, Melbourne’, June 2013 as considered by the Victorian Heritage Council and the various sources cited in that document;

• *Assessment of cultural heritage significance & Executive Director Recommendation to the Heritage Council. Palace Theatre* 22 November

2013 which found the palace as historically significant and socially at a local level.

***Executive Director Recommendation to the Heritage***

***Council 2013***

The following Statement of Significance is from the Assessment of Cultural Heritage Significance and Executive Director Recommendation to the Heritage Council of Victoria, 22 November 2013 3.

`ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

The Palace Theatre has local significance for the following reasons: The Palace Theatre is historically significant at a local level as one of the oldest surviving purpose-built cinemas in the City of Melbourne. It was built in 1912 as a cinema and variety theatre, and has been used since then as a cinema, as a live theatre, and more recently as a nightclub and a live music venue. It is the last remaining

early cinema in Bourke Street, which was once Melbourne’s

main theatre district. The site of the Palace Theatre is historically significant for its continuing use as a place of entertainment in Melbourne since the 1850s. The Palace Theatre is historically significant for its association with the prominent artists Arthur Streeton and Max Meldrum, who rented studios on the second floor between 1919 and c1922.

1 see *Urban Conservation in the City of Melbourne 1985 for definitions*

2

Grade C buildings are of cultural significance for their representation of

different phases of development in the central city. Buildings with a C grading make a contribution to the cultural value of the streetscape or precinct within which they are located

3 p9

The Palace Cinema is significant at a local level as an early twentieth-century theatre building. It demonstrates a range of features from its various periods of construction, such as its original plan form, its two balconies for seating,

remnants of the 1916 plaster decoration in the auditorium, the main stair, the eastern stair with its Art Nouveau tiling and marble treads, the leadlights in the first floor foyer, the dressing room block at the rear and the Moderne style facade.

The Palace Theatre is socially significant at the local level as an important place of popular entertainment in Melbourne since 1912. In the early twenty-first century it has been one of Melbourne most important small music and theatre venues. A threat of demolition in 2013 provoked much opposition, a demonstration in front of Parliament House was attended by more than a thousand people and generated more than 26,000 signatures on an online petition.'

Before reaching this decision, the executive director had consulted;

• Daniel Catrice, ‘Cinemas in Melbourne 1896-1942’, Master of Arts Thesis Monash University 1991

• Lovell Chen, ‘Heritage Appraisal, Palace Theatre,

20-30 Bourke Street, Melbourne’, June 2013

• Ross Thorne, *Picture Palace Architecture in*

*Australia*, South Melbourne 1976

• Ross Thorne, *Cinemas of Australia via USA*, Sydney

University 1981

• ‘A short history of the Australian theatre to 1910, at [www.hat-archive.com/shorthistory.htm](http://www.hat-archive.com/shorthistory.htm)

• Cinema and Theatre Historical Society, Victoria Inc,

‘Cinema Index’, 1994.

**Heritage Council decision 2014**

July 2014 the Heritage Council decided that the Palace was not of State significance but:

`*The Heritage Council refers the recommendation and submissions to the City of Melbourne for consideration for an amendment to the Melbourne Planning Scheme'.*

The Council had considered the following submissions:

**Executive Director, Heritage Victoria** (‘the Executive

Director’)

Submissions were received from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria (Executive Director). Dr Kerry Jordan, Heritage Officer (Architectural History) appeared on behalf of the Executive Director.

**Owner** (‘the Owner’)

Submissions were received from Jinshan Investment Group. The Owner was represented by Mr Chris Canavan QC. Mr Canavan called Mr Peter Lovell, assisted by Ms Kate Gray, of Lovell Chen Architects & Heritage Consultants to provide expert heritage evidence.

**Save the Palace Committee** (‘Save the Palace’)

Submissions were received from the Save the Palace Committee. The Save the Palace Committee was represented by Mr Michael Raymond. Ms Rebecca Leslie was also available for questioning.

**Written submissions**

Written submissions were also received from the National

Trust of Australia (Victoria) (‘the Trust’).

***Council hearing findings***

The following are extracts of relevant criteria discussed by the Heritage Council in their final decision, based on the evidence brought before them.

Criterion A – Importance to the course, or pattern of

Victoria’s cultural history

*`It was accepted by all parties that the Place is of historical importance for its association with the entertainment industry. The Executive Director and the Owner submitted that this is of local significance and that no evidence has been provided which elevates the Place to State level significance. The Committee agrees and is of the view that the Palace Theatre is locally significant for its association with entertainment in the Bourke Street Precinct'*.

And on the subject of night clubs: *`The Committee is of the view that the development of nightclubs may be of importance to the course of Victoria’s cultural history however in the absence of a typological study or thorough comparative analysis of nightclubs in Victoria the Committee was unable to be satisfied that the Metro was a particularly good example of a nightclub and or whether it was more readily capable of being appreciated than other examples…'*

Criterion B – Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria’s cultural history

*` The Committee agrees with the Executive Director and is of the view that being the only surviving theatre in that particular section of Bourke Street makes it of local 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

*` The Committee is of the view that the Palace Theatre is of social significance to the live music community at a local level. The Committee was not persuaded that this association is of a higher level than could be found at other similar venues*.'

Comment

This assessment broadly agrees wit the findings of the Heritage Council and the Executive Director. This assessment has examined the entrepreneurs associated with the theatre under criterion H and believes that the further evidenced provided on the importance of these men in Appendix 3, **Error! Reference source not found.**, allows satisfaction of this criterion on a local level, particularly with the Fullers.

**Methodology details**

The following work was undertaken for this heritage assessment as required:

• Site visit and recording photographically,

• Appraisal of the above previous heritage reports with a check of cited data references;

• Brief appraisal of City of Melbourne heritage policies;

• Check of municipal Building Permit Applications and Public Health data for the site as required;

• Check of newspaper references, National Library of Australia (TROVE);

• Search of City of Melbourne iHeritage database, as required;

• Check of the National Trust of Australia (Vic) and Heritage Council of Victoria web-sites and Hermes database;

• Use of the Lewis, Miles (ed., 1994) *Melbourne- the City's history and development* (published by the City of Melbourne) as a thematic history of the Melbourne CBD, as a development context for the place

• reverence to Thematic History- A History Of The

City Of Melbourne’s Urban Environment, 2012;

Preparation of the written report with comparative analysis carried out within the Melbourne Central Business District context and a Statement of Significance in the practice note format.

**Methodology details**

**Criteria and thresholds**

(For more details see *Palace Theatre, Bourke street, Melbourne: heritage assessment for the City of Melbourne*

*2014, Appendix 5*)

The place has been assessed under the broad categories of aesthetic, historic, social and scientific significance. The

`Hoddle Grid') and the State of Victoria. A place must be at least of local significance to be included in the *Melbourne Planning Scheme* (MPS) Heritage Overlay 4.

***Heritage criteria summary***

The *Victorian Planning Provisions* (VPP) Practice Note, *Applying the heritage overlay* 2012 cites the following criteria as briefly described below:

A place may have:

A importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance);

B uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity);

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

D importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness);

E importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance);

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

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);

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

**Comparative analysis**

The recent Planning Scheme Amendment C186 (Central City

(Hoddle Grid) Heritage Review 2011) Panel Report’s findings on proposed interior protection for some semi- public interiors in CBD places recommended for inclusion in the heritage overlay stated the following:

*We have formed the view that it is not appropriate in the absence of a systematic and comprehensive study of all potential interiors in the city buildings*

comparative geographic base used is that of the `locality’

(all or part of the Central Business District of Melbourne or

4 See MPS schedule to clause 43.01

*to proceed to list the small group incidentally identified by Mr Butler….*

*In our view, there is a need for more thorough investigation of all interiors before any interiors are listed in the central city. A clear understanding of the threshold(s) to be met should be developed. The listing of the interior of a property can quite seriously restrict the flexibility of an owner to adapt the building to his or her needs and should*

*not be lightly applied as a result of some incidental identification.*

***Comprehensive study of all interiors?***

In response to this potentially onerous task (to inspects and assess say all office interiors in the Melbourne CBD), the scarcity of surviving purpose-built live theatres in Melbourne made this task manageable. This has been achieved in Appendix 3 of the October assessment.

Given also that the key heritage value cited in the Statement of Significance was one of historical significance and the fabric that supports it, detailed analysis of, for example, aesthetic issues is irrelevant to that significant value.

Hence the comprehensive comparative analysis has been achieved for historical values because:

• the number of live theatre interiors from the early

20th century is very low;

• all of them have recent images easily publicly available for review;

• I have inspected all of the extant live (Princess, Comedy, Athenaeum, Her Majesty's) or hybrid (like the State, Regent) theatres and previously

analysed two examples in detail (Regent, Her

Majesty's) while including another two on the

RAIA Twentieth Century Architecture register in

1983;

• I examined a similar comparative analysis done by Lovell Chen for the Palace, 2013, as used by the Victorian Heritage Council to arrive at their decision on the Palace interior.

What I was not able to do as cited in the assessment was inspect all existing *cabaret* venues in the CBD as a comparison for recent live entertainment places but this is not a key historical value but rather a contributory one, as demonstrated by historical literature.

*…can quite seriously restrict the flexibility of an owner to adapt the building*

All heritage control (or planning controls generally, like height controls at the Palace site) have the capacity to restrict change to a place, that is their purpose.

There is however a provision in the scheme to restrict change to interiors and in this case the interior is the **key historical or heritage value** possessed by the place, as it would be for a church, for example.

However, because eof the discretion built in the scheme and the other parts of the scheme to be considered (local and State policies) this is not the only aspect of planning control on this building.

***Historical themes***

The historical themes that form the background to place assessment derive from Context 2012: *City of Melbourne Thematic Environmental History*. The themes can be associated with the Australian Historic Themes matrix and the Victoria Framework of Historic Themes developed by Heritage Victoria. relevant themes include: 10: Shaping cultural life, and 13 Enjoying the city.

***Statement of Significance format***

The Statement of Significance format used for the detailed assessments in Appendix 2 is from *Applying the Heritage Overlay* Practice Note 01 (as revised September 2012). This format is as follows:

• What is significant?

• How is it significant?

• Why is it significant?

**Revised study findings**

Built in 1912 as a vaudeville theatre **National Amphitheatre**

and Pastoral Hotel the Palace was soon transformed in

1916 by theatre design expert, Henry White, into a serious live theatre venue, The **Palace Theatre**. The work was done for the new owners, the venerable Fuller Brothers, renowned Sydney entrepreneurs, who had also acquired the nearby Princess Theatre, running the two theatres in a complementary manner, sharing property stores (at rear of Palace) and staff. The Fullers renovated the Princess Theatre auditorium in 1921 following similar designs to the Palace as executed by White in 1916.

Catering for the revival of theatre attendance after World War One, the Palace foyers were enlarged, the stage was deepened and dressing rooms added over the next five years. All of this was also to White's design, facilitating more lavish productions.

The Upper Circle foyers was expanded in 1940 after a decade of fine performances as the **Apollo Theatre** that included Grand Opera, ballet and dramatic performances.

As live theatre declined across Melbourne many theatres turned to showing moving pictures, with the renamed **St James** of 1940 on this site following suite.

After a long and rich theatrical history, the owners Metro- Goldwyn Mayer forged a new purely cinematic image for the theatre and launched it as the **Metro** (one of many Metros across Australia) in 1952. They used another renowned theatre architect, H Vivian Taylor, and chose the Moderne style that had become synonymous with Hollywood as the first major theatre work in Melbourne after the building restrictions brought about by World War Two.

Removal of most of the theatre's proscenium arch for CinemaScope in1955 was a tragic loss5 but this also heralded the advent of another significant era for the building, that of extravagant motion picture releases, American style.

Youth culture swept the world in the 1960s to inspire the new rock musical *Hair* staged at the revived Metro in 1971 by another famous entrepreneur, Harry M Miller. Grease followed along with serious dramatic productions. However it was the staging of *Hair* and *Grease* that set the tone of

the theatre's future.

Then came the emergence of the dance clubs in Australia and Melbourne from the mid 1970s into the 1980s and onwards. The **Palace Theatre Cabaret** commenced here in the mid 1980s, followed by the **Melbourne Metro Nightclub** and again by the **Palace Theatre Nightclub** from

2007.

As a nightclub and major live rock performance venue, the Palace has hosted most of the visiting popular music identities, as perpetuation of its long role as a variety Theatre. As a consequence it is the strong but complementary historical themes that are evoked by the building that add to its value historically and socially.

The surviving fabric of the building expresses the evolution of the entertainment industry in Melbourne and Australia from classically styled 19th century theatre forms to the Moderne style of both the Second War period and the Moderne revival of the 1980s to designs of Biltmoderne Pty Ltd6. However the changes of the 1980s are superficial and

visually transparent while in some cases evoking, in an abstracted form, the previous stage and private box forms

of pre 1955. No comprehensive physical comparative analysis was made of City nightclubs, requiring interior inspections of each, but documentary evidence confirms that this venue was a major one in the Australian context.

The theatre as assessed in October 2014 could be seen as an amalgamation of eras, one clearly visible against the other, but all dedicated to the Australian entertainment industry. The heritage values lie with historical and social importance to Melbourne and are focussed on the auditorium and foyer remnants, along with the façade. Protection of all of these values required a change to the existing heritage status that overlays the exterior only of the theatre, as recommended in October.

5

ample documentation exists for its restoration.

6

Biltmoderne P/L of East Hawthorn established in 1985 see

<http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/col/artist/8282?view=textview>

**Development summary of the Palace Theatre and its site, with associated fabric**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Event** | **associated fabric existing in**  **October 2014** | **Effect of November**  **2014 demolition** |
| 1850s onwards | the site occupied by a hotel, as a meeting place for various groups, a `large room at the back of the Excelsior Hotel; referred to where occasional exhibitions would take place; |  |  |
| 1859 | image shows hotel as two story with mansard roof attics, giving a 3 storey height in a typically lower streetscape; |  |  |
| 1911 | Brennan's Amphitheatres Ltd., controlled by James Brennan, a Sydney based bookmaker and boxing promoter and owner of Brennan's National Amphitheatres used for local vaudeville acts - acquire freehold in Bourke St (this site) intending to build a theatre and hotel |  |  |
| 1911 | Sydney architects, Eaton & Bates, associated with Melbourne-based supervising architect Nahum Barnet design a new Variety Theatre in Bourke Street for Brennan's Amphitheatres Ltd. with probable façade design by Barnet; |  |  |
| 1912 | **BRENNAN'S AMPHITHEATRE** (or **the National Amphitheatre**) opens to hold two thousand people equally divided between gallery and stalls, with two large boxes facing the stage, each capable of holding six to eight people. Used for variety or vaudeville acts, The *Bulletin* reported that `…the new auditorium was simply **a** plain white room with a single raked floor of seating, and a small balcony at the rear. It is combined with the **Pastoral Hotel** which has ground floor bar and upper level bedrooms  along front and side of building; basement used as billiard  saloon. | • shell of the existing building, two stair flights from Bourke St to the upper gallery level, with tiled dados;  • former rooms from hotel use along west side over a covered l ane or ROW as part of the upper level of the  1892 32 Bourke  Street row house | • significant tiled dados removed; |
| 1912  April | Brennan's new theatre, now under Benjamin Fuller management: `The new national amphitheatre, a family resort, appealing to every class of the community, as vaudeville does in the United States and England…'. |  |  |
| 1916 | Prolific theatre architect, Henry White (Sydney & New Zealand) designs major transformation of theatre part of building, giving it two gallery levels and highly ornamental plaster décor in the style of Louis 16th. `The Age' stated that the building `**can fairly claim to rank amongst the most comfortable and up-to-date theatres in Melbourne'** Known as the **Palace** and later **-** it then becomes the vehicle for numerous popular and outstanding variety acts into the 1920s and legitimate or serious theatre in the  1930s along with ballet and opera. Under the Fuller management, the Palace was run in conjunction with the Princess Theatre with which it shared its actors, internal architectural styling, architect (White), and property store at the rear. | • The auditorium internal form, stalls and two galleries (north ends modified at walls) with their plats, plaster  ornamented balustrading or fronts, and `the two slim column  supports' remarked upon by Van  Straten as an advance in theatre structure;  • ground level | • plaster ornamented balustrading or fronts removed;  • general plaster ornamentatio n removed from walls, with main ceiling dome and frieze over  proscenium all  that remains;  • dado panelling to main stair |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Event** | **associated fabric existing in**  **October 2014** | **Effect of November**  **2014 demolition** |
|  |  | internal foyer form;  • marble main stair treads and risers, as modified;  • general plaster ornamentation **but**  • proscenium and private boxes removed | removed. |
| 1918 | Hotel rooms removed from south end of upper levels internal timber stair added- space created thought used for artists studios by Arthur Streeton (1867-1943) noted artist and art school teacher Max Meldrum (1875-1955) | • added stair ground to upper levels, since altered ;  • Toplights of Bourke St window to Dress Circle foyer, in new window frames |  |
| 1921 | New dressing room block at north end of theatre and south of Princess Theatre property store, allowing existing rooms at back of stage to be absorbed for larger stage; new basement under Palace stage. | • dressing room block at north end of theatre, with some internal elements surviving;  • basement under Palace stage as a space only | • |
| 1922 | Ada Reeve starred at the Palace in the London revue *Spangles* and **broke the long-run record for musical productions in Melbourne** |  |  |
| 1923 | New Palace Theatre works for Hugh J Ward Theatres P/L (Sir Benjamin Fuller, Hugh J Ward and John Fuller, head Office Sydney, Melbourne office, Princess Theatre )  Design- Henry White & Gurney, are of the Auditorium  Building  Valued at ₤10,000  **Ground level**  new stalls theatre seating - 752 seats, three 4' wide aisles;  eastern shop becomes large Ladies lounge, with lavatories, similar to recently built rooms at Princess Theatre with tiled floors and dados, partitions of timber lathed and rendered;  part western shop becomes gents cloak room;  existing shopfronts and doors remodelled with Luxfer prism lights to give basement lighting;  existing ladies & Gents conveniences converted to one large retiring room for men, tiled floors and dados;  existing ticket boxes in main entrance relocated to corner of ladies lounge, allowing more entry space;  motor transformer room adjoining manager's office to become treasurer's office; | • Plaster detailing to auditorium walls as upgrade of ornamental style;  • Dress Circle foyer plaster walls, ceiling detailing;  • balconette to Bourke sty with glass doors or windows under reset transom from  1916. | • Plaster detailing to auditorium walls removed;  • Dress Circle foyer plaster walls, ceiling detailing removed;  • timber joinery, including veneered doors, removed. |

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| **Date** | **Event** | **associated fabric existing in**  **October 2014** | **Effect of November**  **2014 demolition** |
|  | New ceiling to stalls entry hall, with Luxfer light dome segment; Private boxes at Stalls level near orchestra removed, leaving the only boxes at Dress Circle, as in Princess;  New dado to Stalls walls and wall niches furred over with fibrous plaster also at Dress Circle level;  Orchestra well rebuilt as Princess Theatre, with maple panelling and hardwood flooring;  Dress Circle foyer absorbs former leased space fronting  Bourke St with raised floor level to match existing stair,  and associated facilities, ladies lounge, gents retiring room,  cloak room, buffet counter, office enlarged- main partitions of plastered breeze blocks and ceiling, fibrous plaster;  1916 Bourke Street window to be replaced 7 with Luxfer light doors in steel frames to pen out (evidently leaving the leaded c1916 transom lights), and balconette created onto Bourke Street for Circle foyer, wrought iron balustrade fabricated by Johns & Waygood  Dress Circle seating at 327, private boxes reduced and reconfigured with new plastered walls, redwood balustrading and lead light doors;  New dado to Dress Circle walls, new doors maple framed with Luxfer light panels  Upper Circle seating at 518, former leased space fronting Bourke St becomes Wardrobe Room (later Rehearsal Room) with 4 skylights plus one central skylight over, private boxes removed with splayed wall in their place;  Facade works include:  • Bricking in of semi-circular upper level façade window, with skylights proposed instead;  • Balconette created onto Bourke Street for Circle foyer, wrought iron balustrade fabricated by Johns & Waygood;  • Sign (see BPA4920) `New palace' 2'6" high letters proud of wall face, lower frame with perimeter globe lighting to splayed border, changeable sign on two lines within |  |  |
| 1934 | Renamed **Apollo Theatre,** some work designed by DF Cowell Ham architect.  New season of *The Merry Malones* attended by His  Excellency the Governor and Lads HuntIngfield at  the Apollo Theatre with the Prime Minister (Mr Lyons).Mrs  Lyons and members of their family. Important and successful Grand Opera season follows, with significant Ernest C Rolls 1935 productions to follow. |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |
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| **Date** | **Event** | **associated fabric existing in**  **October 2014** | **Effect of November**  **2014 demolition** |
| 1936 | Apollo used to screen Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and Paramount releases, managed by Snider and Dean Theatres Ltd. as live theatre falters in melbourne- the Comedy having gone to film in 1935. Live theatre was still staged at the Apollo in these years. |  |  |
| 1938 | **Peter Finch** made what is believed to be **his only Melbourne stage appearance** at the Apollo, as the juvenile lead in the play *So This Is Hollywood,* an Ernest C. Rolls production  More live theatre productions followed, dramas and revues, along with war time and charity events, plus a **Chinese Play i**n  1940 and the Melbourne dance festival and Viennese  Ballet. |  |  |
| 1940 | Theatre was ' relaunched as a picture theatre-the **St**  **James**- on 21 December 1940:  Works for Fuller's Theatres to **Apollo Theatre** include  (Architect Engineer, D F Cowell Ham FRAIA, FRVIA, AMI of  190 Bourke St as designer; Pollard bros builders):  • three levels of seating were interconnected internally via a new jarrah stair from the Circle to Upper Circle on the west side with old stair direct to Bourke St as an escape stair;  • larger foyer space for the Upper Circle uniting the former rehearsal room with the theatre removing art studios, rehearsal room and wardrobe store - with Taubman's Textural Plaster to walls, and  three new rectangular metal-framed windows opened out to Bourke Street, initially of different sizes,; | • Stair from Dress Circle to Upper Circle  • New foyer Upper  Circle | • stair detailing removed;  • foyer stripped. |
| 1941 | 32 (4 rows x 8) extra new seats installed at rear Upper  Circle to Ham's design. |  |  |
| 1942 | Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) take over running of **St**  **James Theatre** with freehold gained in 1947 |  |  |
| 1950 | H Vivian Taylor, FRAIA Architect and Acoustic Consultant makes detailed survey of St James Theatre providing a record of its most developed state as a live theatre (see State Library of Victoria collection). |  |  |
| 1952 | Theatre specialist H Vivian Taylor, FRAIA Architect and Acoustic Consultant of Toorak works for MGM, opening as the **Metro, Bourke St**. with Royal Command film Because You're Mine":  • Moderne style Façade covering existing Edwardian-era form, with façade piers and mouldings cut back and attic and side bay windows bricked in;  • three new upper level windows to Grand or Upper Circle and Dress Circle façade window and flanking columns shown as replaced; | • Upper façade is from this era;  • main stair newel posts;  • timber veneered  `draft screen' rear  of Grand or Upper  Circle |  |

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| **Date** | **Event** | **associated fabric existing in**  **October 2014** | **Effect of November**  **2014 demolition** |
|  | • new pivot hinged armour plate glass doors to stalls foyer set back from street to form lobby with doormat recess, and folding external doors also carpet to foyer floor;  • balustrading replaced on main stair with classical balusters;  • pipe rail on Stalls promenade removed;  • Six moulded rectangular plaster indirect lighting fittings added to auditorium ceiling on radial pattern, four circular plaster lights over promenade;  • new ceiling installed in the stalls foyer and the leaded glass dome in the ceiling removed;  • new draft screen rear of Grand or Upper Circle;  • buffet shown as replaced by sweet counter, Dress  Circle foyer;  • Grand Circle semi-circular balustrade plan cut back at north ends and radiused back to wall.  • Projecting vertical illuminated electric sign to façade, proposed verandah changes. |  |  |
| 1953 | Claimed first use in Victoria of 3D audioscoplc glasses at  Metro |  |  |
| 1955 | **Cowper, Murphy & Associates design for alterations to the New Metro Theatre stage**: most destructive change to theatre to date  • installation of CinemaScope, new larger proscenium,  • remaining revised boxes removed, existing proscenium cornice extended across new opening with new ornament to match existing in panels over;  • balcony front ends cut-back further and returned to wall in radiused form;  • new velvet stage curtaining, upholstered and padded vinyl clad fascia to the stage front;  • main ceiling patched.  Theatre now screens all of MGM's new releases such as  Doctor Zhivago, Gone with the Wind and Gigi.. | • proscenium cornice across opening  with plaster  ornament to match existing in panels over |  |
| 1971-3 | Harry M. Miller promotes ground breaking rock musicals, Hair and Grease at Metro, as first in Melbourne, followed by Palais production of *Jesus Christ Superstar* 1973-4. |  |  |
| 1974-7 | **Palace Theatre** name restored, runs as cinema. |  |  |
| 1980-86 | **Melbourne Revival Centre** purchase the building for  $800,000 t use for church services for 1000 strong congregation |  |  |
| 1986-  2007 | **Palace Theatre Cabaret** commenced, later **Melbourne** | • Transparent metal framed |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Event** | **associated fabric existing in**  **October 2014** | **Effect of November**  **2014 demolition** |
|  | **Metro Nightclub** which opened in November 1987 - Peter  L Brown & Associates P/L architects make both applications.  Major rock artists play there. Redevelopment involved:  • removal of every remaining architectural feature from the end of the balconies to the rear stage wall but retention of some plaster detail over proscenium opening.  • The old foyers, balconies, domed ceiling and the top of the proscenium were retained.  • auditorium floor was releveled and the stage was greatly reduced in depth.  • a new mezzanine floor was connected to the existing balconies by a series of steel walkways and stairways | balustrading  behind existing plaster gallery faces;  • Mezzanine over stage with bridges to galleries;  • Changes to dressing room block interiors;  • cosmetic joinery additions. |  |
| 2007-  2014 | **Palace Theatre Nightclub opens, closes**  Major artists play there. | New street verandah |  |

**Statement of Significance**

***What is significant?***

Contributory elements at he Palace Theatre include:

• all existing external fabric from the 1912,

1916 and 1923 works as the primary

significant period, described in the Building Permit Application drawings, including theatre and remnant Edwardian-era hotel fabric 8;

• three-level brick building with pitched originally corrugated iron clad roof

• the rendered Moderne style 1952 upper level facade with 1923 wrought-iron balconette rail;

• the form of the cantilever 1950s canopy in Bourke Street;

• Dressing room block at the rear of the stage, with emphasis on 1920s external fabric.

**How is it significant?**

The Palace Theatre is historically, and socially significant and of architectural interest to the City of Melbourne.

**Why is it significant?**

***For its historical significance***

The Palace Theatre (also Apollo, St James and Metro) has historical significance to the City of Melbourne, specifically the Central Business District and Bourke Street east precinct:

• As a now rare survivor of a former live theatre in the Bourke Street East theatre precinct, an area that was once the focus of Melbourne’s theatre and later cinema life. Built principally for use as a live theatre, the Palace is now the oldest of its type in the Melbourne CBD and provides evidence of traditional live theatre auditorium form, with its two semi- circular galleries (Dress Circle and the Upper Circle), fly tower and dressing

room wing. Over the years it has entertained several generations of

Melburnians with an eclectic range of

entertainment—from grand opera to rock opera, via farce, magic, pantomime and plays.

• As the setting for some significant performers and performances on the Melbourne Stage. Some of the players include (in alphabetical order) David Atkins, Florence Austral, Gus Bluett, Nellie Bramley, Coral Browne, Dorothy Brunton, John Diedrich, Peter Finch, Sir Seymour Hicks, Marcia Hines, Kate Howarde, Reg Livermore, Charles Norman, Carrie

Moore, Queenie Paul, Ada Reeve, Roy Rene ‘Mo’, Ella Shields, Terry- Thomas, George Wallace, Allan Wilkie and Strella Wilson among many others. Notable productions include the controversial plays Children in Uniform (1934) and Bury the Dead (1938), the famous Fuller Grand Opera Season (1934), Jack O’Hagan’s Australian musical Flame of Desire (1935), and the rock musicals Hair (1971) and

Grease (1972) 9;

• For the gala occasions under MGM

including the Night of Stars staged on 2

October 1959 by Stuart Wagstaff to raise funds to support Anne Hathaway, J.C. Williamson Theatres’ entrant in the ‘Miss Show Business of 1959’ contest. Artists in the first half of the program included Evie Hayes, Will Mahoney, Graham Kennedy (Star of the Year Award 1959), Joff Ellen, Toni Lamond, Frank Sheldon, the Horrie Dargie Quintet, Robin Bailey and Richard Walker. VTT member Robert Foster was one of the dancers, and another VTT member, Ronald Folkard, was on the stage management team…

• as the venue (St James and later the Metro) for many long running motion pictures that dominated Melbourne's post second War social life as a major release house, screening Gigi, Ben Hur, Mary Poppins and Doctor Zhivago, Gigi and Gone wit the Wind.

***For its historical associations***

For the building's association with some major theatrical figures in Australia:

8

held by the VPRO -refer to chronology

9 Frank Van Straten's 2007 historical summary *On Stage..*

• with managements and lessees including Sir Ben Fuller, Stanley McKay, Harry M. Miller, Gladys Moncrieff, the National Theatre Movement, Frank Neil, New Theatre, Ernest C. Rolls, F.W.Thring and Hugh J. Ward. And Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM), which ran the theatre as a

cinema from December 1940 to 1971, first as the St James and then as the Metro Bourke Street. These people are among the foremost theatrical entrepreneurs in Australian Theatre history, with particular emphasis on the overriding guidance of the Fuller family, specifically Sir Benjamin Fuller who was knighted in 1921 and helped found ABC radio in 1929 with this theatre as one of its early performance venues in 1934.

• For its close link with the highly significant Princess Theatre on the adjoining rear block, which shared the same interior designer (White), management and ownership (Ben Fuller, Fuller Brothers), and a simular performance program, with performers exchanging roles in the two theatres between shows.

***The Palace site has historical interest***

• for the continuing use of the site as a

place of entertainment since the 1850s, in

two buildings: the Excelsior Hotel which occupied the site from 1858-1911, and the hotel parts in the present building dating from 1912.

***For its architectural or aesthetic interest***

The Palace Cinema is of architectural interest to the City of Melbourne as a well-preserved post Second War cinema façade that was created immediately building restrictions were relaxed in Melbourne in the early 1950s.

Architecturally, the building retains:

• The Moderne style façade street façade, well-preserved above verandah level and the work of a well known theatre and cinema architect, H Vivian Taylor, executed in a corporate Metro style for North American firm, Metro Goldwyn Mayer.

The building is principally the work of two well known and acclaimed Australian theatre

architects, White and Taylor while the building carcase was designed by another earlier theatre specialist. Nahum Barnet.

***For its Social significance***

The Palace Theatre is socially significant to Metropolitan Melbourne as an important place of popular entertainment in Melbourne since 1912.

In the late 20th and early 21st century it has been one of Melbourne most important music and theatre venues. This has been demonstrated since the 1980s by the public reaction to the threats of demolition of the building over time, with recent

‘Save the Palace’ movement including multiple web entries, a protest rally outside Parliament House on 12 October 2013 and an online petition of over 25,000 ‘signatures’. Beyond conservation campaigns, the Palace has been remembered by writers and critics as they look back on theatre history in Australia.

**Existing heritage control**

The building is central to the Bourke Hill precinct (HO500) and was graded D3 in the Central Activities District Conservation Study 1985. Any external works that are not maintenance or demolition requires a planning permit. Comment

has been made that the building is out of scale and not contributory to the heritage overlay

***Bourke Hill Precinct Statement of Significance***

(My bold)

`This precinct derives much importance from its association with Parliament House which was built progressively from 1856. This nineteenth century complex dominates the Bourke St vista from as far away as William St, and is emphasized by the sympathetic scale of the buildings on either side of the Bourke St hill. The precinct also includes such stylish and prominent buildings facing Spring St as the Princess Theatre (1886) and the Hotel Windsor (1883). These contribute to the good amenity of Spring St and its gardens. The buildings on either side of Bourke St reflect the variety of social activities that have taken place in this area since the mid nineteenth century. The scale of the city's buildings prior to the boom era of the 1880's is seen in the simple design and low scale of the two- storey Crossleys Building (1884-1853).

The area also comprises part of **the entertainment precinct** of the central city, and a building such as the Salvation Army Temple (1890) reflects the interest of social reformers in the nearby 'back

slums' epitomised by the nearby Gordon House (18814). A philanthropic venture built by a syndicate headed by theatre-manager and politician George Coppin, it was named after the martyr of Khartoum and was an ambitious venture intended to provide family accommodation for the respectable poor. The venture was not successful in achieving its purpose. however, and Gordon House later became a shelter for homeless men. It

survives as a unique social document in the narrow confines of Little Bourke St, and is complemented by the low scale of surrounding red brick buildings.

The juxtaposition of the Parliament, the former deprived areas of Little Bourke St and the style of Bourke St gives the precinct an unrivalled historic texture and **overall the theatres, hotels, cafes and quality bookshops contribute to the relaxed and**

**elegant character of the eastern end of the city.**'10

The `Key Attributes' or physical character implied by this statement:

• Low-scale Victorian buildings.

• The visual dominance of the

parliamentary buildings on the Bourke Hill

skyline, and the vista along Bourke Street

to Parliament House.

*Council management of this heritage overlay is derived Clause 22.04 in the Melbourne Planning Scheme: ` which includes as policy `The recommendations for individual buildings, sites and areas contained in the* ***Central City Heritage Study Review 1993 e****xcept for the buildings detailed in the incorporated document titled Central City (Hoddle Grid) Heritage Review: Statements of Significance June 2013, in which*

*case the Central City (Hoddle Grid) Heritage Review Statements of Significance June 2013 will apply…(and)*

*Regard shall be given to buildings listed A, B, C and D in the individual conservation studies, and their significance as described by their individual*

*Building Identification Sheet. '*

The Palace Theatre fits the entertainment theme of the Bourke St Hill context outlined above and the relatively low scale in the streetscape leading up to parliament House. The envelope of the building within the streetscape is Edwardian-era with the 1952 facade a thin layer over an

10

Edwardian-era form. This was a form that perpetuated a similar scale differential to the

1850s hotel on the site that dominated this part of the streetscape in images from the 1850s.

***Discussion of recommended controls***

While many of the cultural values held by the theatre were enhanced by the interior as it was in October, the ornament and decoration that expressed the significant development eras of the interior have now been removed. While parts of the interior (plaster) have evidently been retrieved and plans made for some potential reinstatement, this has not occurred and if achieved may essentially mean that most of the interior was a

2104(?) recreation.

The *Practice Note* | 01 Revised September 2012,

*Applying the Heritage Overlay* states (my bold):

***Applying internal alterations controls*** *Internal alteration controls over specified buildings can be applied in the schedule by including a ‘yes’ in the Internal Alteration Controls Apply? column.* ***This provision should be applied sparingly and on a selective basis to special interiors of high significance.*** *The*

*statement of significance for the heritage place should explain what is significant about the interior and why it is important.*

Given the requirement of the practice note Consequently recommended development controls are confined to the exterior as scheduled in clause 43.01 of the *Melbourne Planning Scheme.11*

**Recommendations**

***1. Palace Theatre heritage overlay***

To ensure the rich cultural significance of the place is conserved in its own right rather than as a potentially contributory element to the Bourke Hill heritage precinct, the Palace should be added to

11

See **Policy Reference:** Urban Conservation in the City of

Melbourne 1985; Central Activities District Conservation Study

1985; Harbour, Railways, Industrial Conservation South

Melbourne Conservation Study 1985; Graeme Butler &

Clause 22.04 in the *Melbourne Planning Scheme*

Associates, Central City (Hoddle Grid) Heritage Review 2011

the schedule to the heritage overlay under the *Melbourne Planning Scheme, clause 43.01*, with external paint colour control applied and conservation management derives from the contributory elements (external fabric from the period 1912-1953) as listed in the Statement of Significance of this revised report which should be made an incorporated document under the

scheme to assist management of the place.

***2. Palace Theatre archive***

Given the findings of the October assessment, and the subsequent loss of significant interior fabric,

an archive should be prepared outlining and depicting the heritage values of the place and including copies of all building plans as lodged with the State Library of Victoria and VPRO and all images gathered of the interior to be lodged in the State Library of Victoria and local libraries.