

Riverview House, 276 Flinders Street

History

The building at 276 Flinders Street (also listed as 274-282 Flinders Street or 280 Flinders Street) was constructed in 1968-1969 for the Commonwealth Bank of Australia Ltd on the site of Fink's Building which was demolished c1967. In the 1970s the bank was also addressed to 2-6 Elizabeth Street as the Commonwealth Savings Bank of Australia (*Sands & McDougall Directories*, 1970 & 1974). The architect for the building has not been identified.

The building is located on a prominent corner at the intersection of Flinders and Elizabeth Streets and comprises a 13-storey office tower at the corner which rises above a long low podium which extends along Elizabeth Street. Both the high rise building and podium are detailed in a similar manner with bands of aluminium-framed windows separated horizontally by spandrels and vertically by projecting vertical elements. A multi-storey addition was constructed above the north end of the low podium in Elizabeth Street in 2018 and projects beyond the face of the original building.



Figure 1. Riverview House, 276 Flinders Street (Source: CoM Maps)

Mr Trethowan's entry in Appendix C of his Statement of Expert Evidence

Mr Trethowan includes a building at 280 Flinders Street in Appendix C 'Typological Review' of his Statement of Expert Evidence for 457-469 Little Collins Street; this entry reads:

	Date	Address	Name	Architect	Comment / Status
26	1962	280 Flinders St	Federation House	JL & EM Daly	Corner response, heavily altered

This assertion is not borne out by our research. 'Federation House' was the original name of a six-storey building located at 342 Flinders Street constructed in 1956 to a design by Meldrum & Noad (CoM). In 1962 (a date matching that provided by Mr Trethowan) Federation House had five storeys added to it. The building at 342 Flinders Street was substantially refurbished in 1988 (CoM) and now has the appearance of a building dating from the late 1980s – refer Figure 2.

In comparison, Sands & McDougall Directory indicates that the Fink's Building was extant at 276 Flinders Street until at least 1965 and that it wasn't until 1970 that building constructed for the Commonwealth Bank of Australia is recorded in the directory on this site. The current building at 276 Flinders Street cannot therefore, have been constructed in 1962 and it was never, to our understanding named 'Federation House'. Further, stylistically the form of the building is more typical of a late 1960s or early 1970s podium and tower form rather than a building of the early 1960s.

It is my view that Mr Trethowan's office may have confused aspects of 342 Flinders Street (Federation House) with 276 Flinders Street (Riverview House) and without access to the source material I do not consider the entry in Appendix C of Mr Trethowan's evidence to be reliable.



Figure 2. 342 Flinders Street (formerly Federation House, now China Southern Airlines House)
(Source: CoM Maps)

Reason for not recommending in the Heritage Overlay

Early images (refer Figures 3 and 4 below) indicate that the building originally presented as a highly vertical composition with recessive horizontal window and spandrel bands set behind short unpainted precast concrete elements which aligned to form continuous vertical bands. The vertical emphasis was strong and repetitive across the main facades.

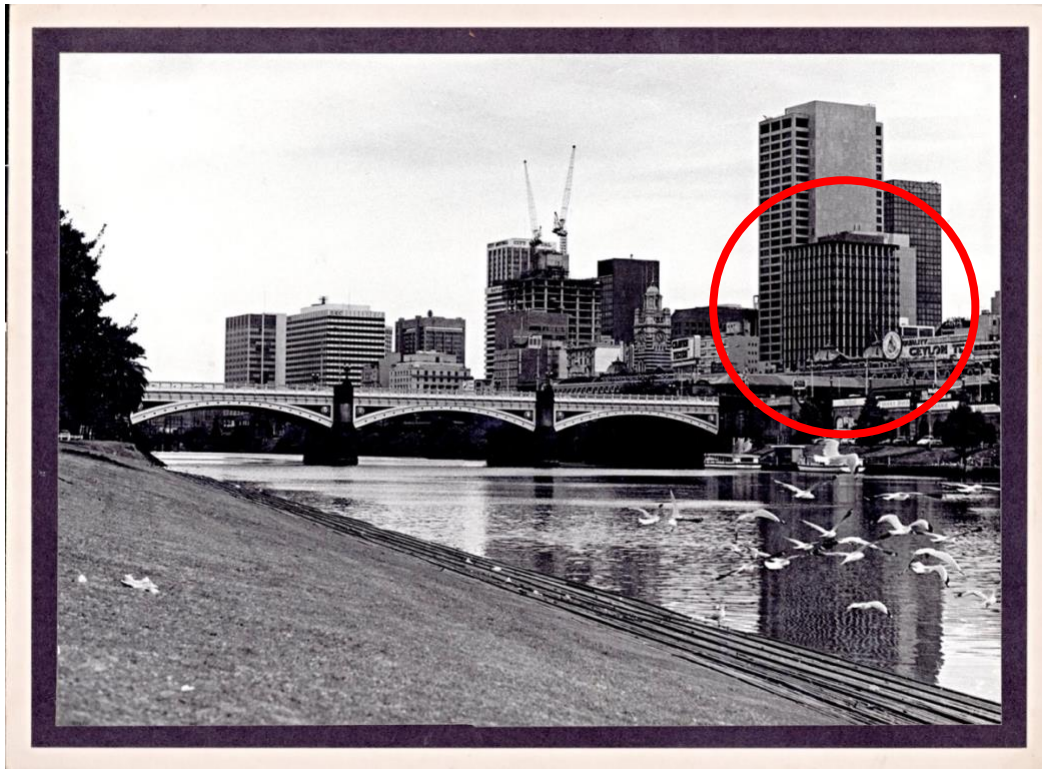


Figure 3. View of the city from the south bank of the Yarra River, 1975, showing the south and east elevations of the building at 276 Flinders Street. (Source: State Library of Victoria).



Figure 4. Detail of figure 1.



Figure 5. View of Elizabeth Street facade of 376 Flinders Street, undated image. This image shows the previously unpainted concrete vertical elements of the office tower, the already painted vertical elements of the podium level and an earlier street awning. (Source: State Library of Victoria)

A number of highly impactful changes have been made to the building since construction which have substantially altered the original design intent and reduced the understanding of the building as an example of a Post-War Modernist building; these include:

- Re-cladding of all spandrels in unsympathetic material (aluminium composite panels?)
- Painting of the previously unpainted concrete vertical elements, using one colour at the podium level and alternating colours at the tower
- Construction of a multi-storey addition above the northern end of the podium
- Alterations at street level, including insertion of later shop facades and addition of glazed awning above footpath
- Alterations to the podium façade at Flinders Street, including the addition of large coloured fins at the east end.

These substantial changes have greatly impacted on the architectural integrity of the original building and obscured the original design intent of the late 1960s building. The building is now difficult to understand as a Modernist building from the postwar period (1945-1975) and there are many more intact examples recommended for inclusion on the Heritage Overlay through C387melb.

Jim Gard'ner, Director
GJM Heritage

15 September 2021

200 Little Collins Street (now known as Council House 1)

History

The office building at 200 Little Collins Street, now known as Council House 1, was constructed in 1968 above an existing four level carpark, constructed partially underground. The architect for the building has not been identified.

The site between Russell Place and Royal Lane was located behind the Bijou Theatre and was known as the Bijou carpark for a period until the early 1950s (*Sands & McDougall Directories*, various dates). By 1955 the Grand Central Carpark and Fuller House had been built on the site, containing 6 separate occupancies presumably located at street level (*Sands & McDougall Directory* 1955) – refer Figures 2 & 3. The carpark was a four-level carpark with levels below ground and was already in use in 1955 when an eight-storey office building was proposed for the site, to a design by architect Harry Seidler (*The Age*, 20 July 1955:1) – refer Figure 4. This scheme was evidently not built and the carpark, with six ground floor tenancies to Little Collins Street, occupied the site until 1968 when the existing building was erected above the existing carpark (*The Age*, 16 December 1975: 3). The wide street level entrance presumably replaced the central two tenancies and the carpark appears to have been reconfigured to some extent.

The seven-storey building, known as the Grand Central Carpark building and owned by the APM Society, was occupied by various State and Federal Government departments when purchased by the Melbourne City Council in 1975 (*The Age*, 16 December 1975: 3). The purchase by Council was to enable the relocation of administration headquarters from the Town Hall.



Figure 1. 200 Little Collins Street (Source: CoM Maps)

Reason for not recommending in the Heritage Overlay

In Appendix C 'Typological Review' of his Statement of Expert Evidence for 457-469 Little Collins Street, Bruce Trethowan includes Council House, 200 Little Collins Street in a table of 'Other Examples'. In this table the building is described as 'some alterations at lower levels but largely intact. **Conceived as a whole object.**' [emphasis added]

The existing building was actually built in two stages, 1954/1955 and 1968, and was not conceived and constructed as a whole. The upper seven storeys were constructed above an existing structure and the two-part design is clearly evident in its current form making this building an outlier or highly atypical example of this class of place. Despite the intactness of the upper building, the architectural integrity this property as whole is substantially less than other more-holistically designed office buildings of this period. The examples recommended for inclusion on the Heritage Overlay within C387melb demonstrate the key characteristics of the postwar office type to a higher degree than 200 Little Collins Street.



Figure 2. 1954 looking south, carpark not yet constructed (Source: CoM)



Figure 3. looking south down Russell Place – car park to the right, late 1950s (Source: CoM)



Figure 4. Model of proposed building at 200 Little Collins Street by architect Harry Seidler, to be built above an already complete carpark (Source: *The Age*, 20 July 1955, p 1)



Figure 5. Street level entrance to 200 Little Collins Street. Wolfgang Sievers, 1976. (Source: State Library of Victoria)



Figure 6. Royal Lane (west) elevation of 200 Little Collins Street showing the lower carpark wall and the contrasting structure above. Wolfgang Sievers, 1976. (Source: State Library of Victoria)

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