

Expert Witness Statement by:
Peter Andrew Barrett

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For:

Planning Panels Victoria
Hearing

With regard to a site at
287-289 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne,
proposed for inclusion in the
Elizabeth Street West Precinct heritage overlay
as a 'Significant' building,
as part of Amendment C271 of the
Melbourne Planning Scheme

Prepared for:
Inner Metropolis Holdings (owner)

Instructions received from:
John Cicero (Best Hooper Lawyers)

17 July 2018

PREAMBLE

Inner Metropolis Holdings Pty Ltd, the owner of the subject site, 287-289 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne, commissioned this expert witness statement. This expert witness statement is in light of Amendment C271 to the *Melbourne Planning Scheme*, which proposes to include the site in the proposed Elizabeth Street West Precinct heritage overlay as a 'Significant' building.

A heritage assessment undertaken as part of the 'Guildford and Hardware Laneways Heritage Study 2017: Statements of Significance', identified the building as a 'Significant' heritage place of the proposed Elizabeth Street West Precinct.

The purpose of this expert witness statement is to assist the Panel in its assessment of this proposal to include the site within the Elizabeth Street West Precinct, and to grade the building at 287-289 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne a 'Significant' building of this proposed precinct.

My qualifications and experience in the field of architectural history and heritage conservation are outlined below.

QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE

I am a qualified architectural historian and conservation consultant. I have a Masters Degree in Architectural History and Conservation from the University of Melbourne. I also have architectural and other heritage related qualifications from the University of Melbourne and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT). In 2017, I completed a program at the Project for Public Spaces, New York, in urban design and placemaking.

I am a member of Australia ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites), and I adhere to its *Burra Charter 2013*. I am a member of the Pacific Heritage Reference Group whose purpose is to provide advice to the President and the Executive Committee of Australia ICOMOS on cultural heritage matters in the Pacific region. Other affiliations that I have are membership of the Australian Architecture Association, and the Society of Architectural Historians of Australia and New Zealand.

I have been involved in a range of heritage projects within Australia including heritage studies, conservation management plans, and heritage assessments of residential, commercial, industrial and public buildings. I have operated my own heritage practice for 21 years.

I have appeared as an expert witness on heritage matters at VCAT, Panel Hearings Victoria, and the Heritage Council of Victoria.

I have previously undertaken heritage assessments for Port Phillip, Glenelg, Wyndham, Hobsons Bay and Maroondah councils. I work in a heritage advisory capacity for Port Phillip, Kingston and Latrobe City councils.

I have worked on heritage projects in New South Wales and Tasmania. I have also worked on heritage projects overseas. In 2004, I received an exporter's grant from Austrade for the provision of heritage services to the United States. In 2011, I was invited to speak at the California Preservation Foundation conference in Santa Monica.

I have written published architectural histories for the Public Record Office Victoria, the City Museum and for the *Melbourne Design Guide*. I have also been commissioned to write histories of commercial and residential buildings in Melbourne. I am the author of an online architectural history and heritage blog.

The University of Melbourne, RMIT and other educational institutions have engaged me as a tutor and lecturer in architectural history and design. I have also been retained by RMIT to assess postgraduate-level architectural theses. Educational organizations, as well as heritage groups and the media, ask me to speak, or to comment, on architectural history and heritage matters.

In 2014 my heritage practice, Peter Andrew Barrett, was a recipient of a bronze commendation from the Lord Mayor of Melbourne for its contribution to the 'vitality' of the City of Melbourne.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

This heritage assessment is prepared with regard to the *Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, 2013*, which is the standard of heritage practice in Australia.

I have reviewed the document 'Applying the Heritage Overlay' (Planning Practice Note 1, January 2018) that is prepared by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning. Contained within that document are the HERCON criteria for the assessment of heritage value(s) of a heritage place.

My assessment is prepared with regard to the *Melbourne Planning Scheme*, in particular its policies with regard to heritage.

My assessment of this site and the building is prepared with regard to the Incorporated Document 'Guildford and Hardware Laneways Heritage Study 2017: Methodology Report' prepared for the City of Melbourne (May 2017). I have also reviewed a document titled 'Guildford and Hardware Laneways Heritage Study 2017. Statements of Significance', which includes a statement of significance for this site at 287-289 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne, and this is attached to a 'Report to the Future Melbourne (Planning) Committee (Agenda 6.2) that is dated 15 May 2018.

My assessment is based, in part, on an inspection of the subject site and its environs undertaken on 4 July 2018.

During the course of preparing this expert witness statement I have undertaken research into the history of this site, its building, and its environs; using primary and secondary sources. Where primary and secondary sources are relied upon in this expert witness statement I have referenced them in footnotes.

SITE & ENVIRONS

The subject site is situated on the west side of Elizabeth Street, between Lonsdale and Little Lonsdale Street. This block of Elizabeth Street is defined predominantly by a built form of a fine-grain character of two and three-storey commercial buildings of pre-World War II origin.

A notable exception to this fine grain character is Mitchell House, a six-storey Streamline Moderne building completed in 1937 at the northwest corner of Lonsdale and Elizabeth Streets. As well as being taller than the other buildings in this block, it also has a significantly broader frontage in Elizabeth Street than buildings to its north.¹ Mitchell House is recognised to be of architectural significance at a State level by the Heritage Council of Victoria.²

The other buildings in this block of Elizabeth Street have varying levels of integrity, and changes to their facades on their upper levels detract from their original architectural character. This includes painting of brickwork, signage (both painted and fixed-signage), and awnings. Very few of the original shopfronts at ground level are extant.

Opposite the subject site, on the east side of Elizabeth Street, is St Francis Catholic Church. The church site occupies the entire block between Lonsdale and Little Lonsdale Streets; and the church was built between 1841-45. St Francis Catholic Church is recognised to be of historical, architectural and social significance at a State level by the Heritage Council of Victoria.³

The rear of the subject site extends along part of Heape Court. Another portion extends along the north side of Mitchell Lane (entered off Lonsdale Street), and may contain parts of an earlier building. Heape Court has a pitched bluestone surface and its built form character is defined by the rear of buildings on the west side of Elizabeth Street of pre World War II origin, of an utilitarian architectural character, and of varying levels of intactness.

The west side of this portion of Heape Court has buildings of a similar period and character. Heape Court extends to the west at its south end, and further along the right-of-way branches into two lanes. In this other part of Heape Court is Heape Court warehouse, built in 1854 that is recognised to be of historical and architectural significance at a State level by the Heritage Council of Victoria.⁴

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- 1 The building was never completed as proposed, as it was to have ten-storeys and a broader frontage at this height to Elizabeth Street. *Herald*, 26 February 1937, p14.
 - 2 Heritage Council of Victoria, *Victorian Heritage Register*, VHR H2232 Mitchell House.
 - 3 Heritage Council of Victoria, *Victorian Heritage Register*, VHR H0013 St Francis Catholic Church.
 - 4 Heritage Council of Victoria, *Victorian Heritage Register*, VHR H0826 Heape Court Warehouse.

*The subject site at 287-289
Elizabeth Street,
Melbourne (JB Hi-Fi).*



The building on the subject site (at front) is a two-storey brick late-Victorian building that has been altered during the twentieth century. The building has a gable roof that is clad in corrugated galvanised steel sheeting. There is a clerestory window on a portion of this roof towards the rear (south side). The roof is concealed from both Elizabeth Street and Heape Court by parapets.

The ground floor shopfront is not original, and above this an awning projects forward above the footpath. The upper portion of the façade is designed in a Mannerist or Free Classical style. The façade is composed in a tripartite arrangement, defined by brick piers. At centre is a raised scrolled pediment which contains an arched vent to the roof space. Detailing on the parapet is florid, and includes the letters *J C*, most probably a reference to John Cooper & Sons – its original owner. In addition to the shopfront and awning, other change includes removal of an anvil detail at the top of the raised section of parapet.

The interior of the building is relatively unremarkable; and aside from its circular iron posts, little early fabric or finishes are extant. The ground floor is concrete, and a stair along the north (side) wall is of post-war origin. Upstairs has a timber frame floor, but the floorboards are a narrow tongue and groove type and appear to be of twentieth century origin. The ceiling is also of twentieth century origin, of Masonite boards with joins concealed with battens (board and batten).

Rear single-storey brick addition of 287-289 Elizabeth Street, of early twentieth century origin, viewed from Heape Court.



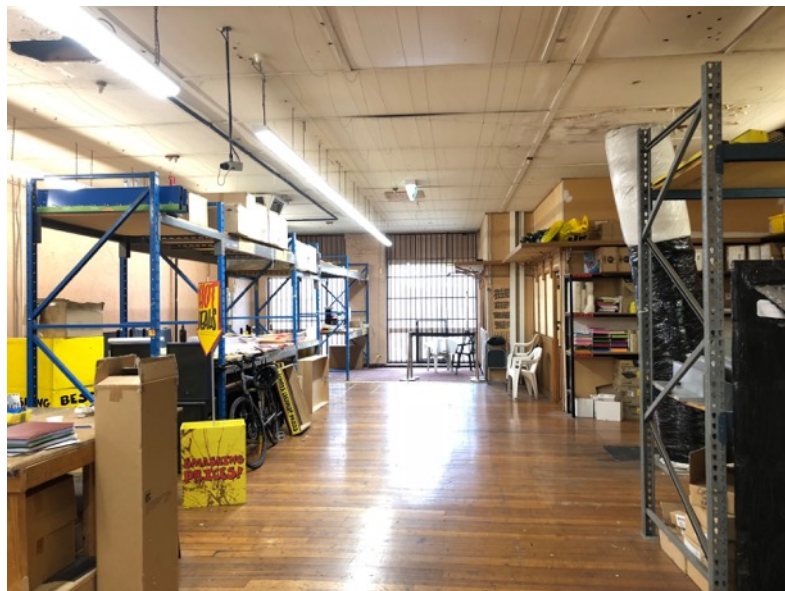
The south elevation of the rear addition to 287-289 Elizabeth Street, viewed from Mitchell Lane. The wall contains remnants of the bluestone wall of an earlier building (marked with an arrow).



Ground floor of 287-289
Elizabeth Street,
Melbourne, looking east
towards Elizabeth Street.



First floor of 287-289
Elizabeth Street,
Melbourne, looking east
towards Elizabeth Street.



HISTORY

The building on the subject site was built for the iron merchants, John Cooper and Sons. John Cooper was trading earlier in Bourke Street (West), and by the late 1880s had established his business on this site. Prior to Cooper, two other ironmongers ran businesses from this site.⁵

John Cooper was 51 years of age, when he was killed, crushed by a cart in Heape Court in 1889.⁶ His sons continued to run the business from this site after his death. In 1893, fire destroyed the firm's earlier premises. These are described as a single storey front shop and offices, and a store at the back.⁷

The new premises (existing building on the site) were completed around 1894-95.⁸ The architect of the new building was Henry J Henderson, and the contractor of the works was F H Shackelford of Toorak.⁹ The firm traded from this site until around 1919, when the company relocated to Newcastle, NSW.¹⁰

From the 1920s the site was occupied by Milledge Bros, who are described as motor-cycle importers.¹¹ Earlier, Milledge Bros had traded from premises in Post Office Place (Little Bourke Street).¹² The firm traded from these Elizabeth Street premises until at least 1965.¹³ Later, Tattersalls occupied a portion of the premises.¹⁴

The current owners of the site are Inner Metropolis Holdings, and the building forms part of a JB Hi Fi Store, which extends within three buildings to Lonsdale Street.

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- 5 Nash and Smith were trading here in 1878, and in the 1850s and 60s, W H & G Freer, were trading from this site. *Sands & McDougall Melbourne Directories*.
- 6 *Argus*, 15 April 1889, p10.
- 7 *Adelaide Advertiser*, 21 February 1893, p5. *Age*, 21 February, 1893, p6.
- 8 *Australasian*, 31 August 1895, p9.
- 9 Miles Lewis, *Architectural Index*, Record No 75184, retrieved 10 July 2018.
- 10 *Newcastle Sun*, 23 Sept 1919, p5.
- 11 *Weekly Times*, 9 May 1925, p61.
- 12 *Winner*, 25 November 1914, p11.
- 13 *Sands & McDougall Melbourne Directories*.
- 14 *Sands & McDougall Melbourne Directories*.

John Cooper & Sons, 287-289 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne c1895 (Source of photograph: Royal Historical Society of Victoria collection).



Drawing of Mitchell Lane, looking north c1925. The rear (south elevation) of Milledge Bros motorcycle works is visible at the end of the lane. Much of the wall has now been concealed by later buildings and altered (State Library of Victoria Picture Collection).



ANALYSIS

It is proposed to include the subject site at 287-289 Elizabeth Street within the proposed HO1204 Elizabeth Street West Precinct, as part of Amendment C271 of the *Melbourne Planning Scheme*. The building is graded as a 'Significant' heritage place of this proposed precinct.

Elizabeth Street West Precinct

The proposed Elizabeth Street West Precinct is a non-contiguous grouping of built form and urban environment, which is concentrated on the west side of Elizabeth Street between Bourke and Latrobe Streets. This precinct also includes adjacent laneways to the west of Elizabeth Street.

The precinct was developed from the mid-nineteenth century and contains predominantly small commercial and light industrial buildings built up to the 1930s. This precinct is recognised to be of local historical and aesthetic/architectural significance to the City of Melbourne.

The statement of significance prepared for the proposed precinct notes (in part) that these historical values are derived from:

...Valued development ranges from the mid-nineteenth century, when smaller scale shops and businesses were established to service the north-bound traffic out of the city and residents living in the western part of the CBD; through to the later nineteenth century and inter-war period, when larger showrooms and grander commercial buildings were constructed. The later development variously accommodated motor bicycle and motor related businesses, garment and other manufacturers, and banks.

...laneways running parallel to Elizabeth Street are also of historical significance. While they provide evidence of a typical Melbourne laneway's role in servicing the rears of properties to the main street, they also retain evidence of their own nineteenth and early twentieth century development, including former factories and warehouses which were independent of Elizabeth Street and not of a retail nature (Criterion A).

The statement of significance accurately describes the character of the area, and the proposed Elizabeth Street West Precinct meets Criterion A. It should be added that the area served both people leaving for, and arriving from, the goldfields (not only 'north-bound traffic').

The building on this site is, however, a later part of development that occurred towards the end of the nineteenth century, well after the gold rush, when larger showrooms and industry established in the area. The rear of the site contributes, as do other buildings in Heape Court, to the industrial character of this lane.

The site has a narrow frontage at the end of Mitchell Lane. Mitchell Lane is within the Elizabeth Street West Precinct, but is not assessed to any degree as part of the 'Guildford and Hardware Laneways Heritage Study 2017: Methodology Report' prepared for the City of Melbourne (May 2017), as no statement of significance is prepared for the lane.

The aesthetic/architectural significance of the Elizabeth Street West Precinct is derived from (in part):

...a range of two and three storey Victorian, Edwardian and interwar commercial and retail buildings, anchored by some key corner buildings of individual significance, often designed by well-regarded architects. While many of the contributory buildings are typical rather than exceptional in terms of form and detailing, they nevertheless provide evidence of the physical evolution and function of the precinct, including the earlier buildings as evidenced in the fine grained terrace rows. Shopfronts have generally been replaced, but upper levels and parapets are largely intact to their early states. Boxed awnings extend over footpaths. Brick, rendered masonry and concrete are common materials (Criterion E).

and

The Elizabeth Street West Precinct is additionally significant for retaining evidence of the typical retail and commercial buildings which were established in many commercial streets of inner Melbourne from the mid-nineteenth century. It has the principal characteristics of such development, and early retail strips, as seen in the fine grained terrace rows with shops at ground floor level, and office or residential spaces above. The upper levels are typically more intact than the ground floor shopfronts. Larger buildings, including banks and showrooms, also commonly anchor street corners (Criterion D).

The proposed Elizabeth Street West Precinct can be considered to meet Criterion D and Criterion E.

The Elizabeth Street façade is relatively typical of late-nineteenth century commercial buildings within Melbourne, where detailing is more florid than that found on early and mid-Victorian commercial buildings. Its first-floor façade, which remains relatively intact, is a representative type of commercial development of this period, rather than an exemplar or significant example aesthetically.

A brief statement of significance has also been prepared for this building, which identifies it to be of local aesthetic/architectural significance. This significance is said to derive from:

...While the ground floor and verandah have been altered, the façade to Elizabeth Street is more intact to its upper levels. It is here that the building displays its understated Baroque expression, representing an early example of the mode which is notable for its association with a commercial rather than an institutional use. Significantly the facade incorporates a rich collection of architectural details, some quite florid in their expression, and finished at the top by a massive pediment.

The original ground floor shopfront and verandah are more accurately described as removed. This is, however, consistent with other buildings in the street. Also, consistent with the other shops in the street, is a relatively intact first floor façade. The centrepiece of the parapet, an anvil-like element, has been removed, which has diminished the effect of the original composition.

It is correct that the parapet contains expressive detailing. Florid detailing is relatively common on commercial buildings of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, and in light of this should not be considered unusual or particularly noteworthy. The reference to the façade having a Baroque-styling, is in my view not accurate, as there is usually a deeper layering of elements (projecting and receding) in the Baroque style. Rather the florid detailing, and the playfulness of the original design when it had the anvil detailing, would be in my view more consistent with Mannerist architecture of the period, albeit relatively restrained in this style. A better example of Mannerism, completed a year or so earlier than John Cooper & Sons, and also in Elizabeth Street, is the Block Arcade (a similar elevation fronts Collins Street).

Block Arcade, 96 Elizabeth Street, is a finer and more intact example of Mannerist design of the late-nineteenth century in Melbourne (Source of photograph: Wikimedia Commons).



A significant heritage place is defined in the study as:

...individually important at state or local level, and a heritage place in its own right. It is of historic, aesthetic, scientific, social or spiritual significance to the municipality. A 'significant' heritage place may be highly valued by the community; is typically externally intact; and/or has notable features associated with the place type, use, period, method of construction, siting or setting. When located in a heritage precinct a 'significant' heritage place can make an important contribution to the precinct.

The John Cooper & Sons building is not to my knowledge highly valued by the community; nor is it externally intact, or particularly notable in its features for a commercial building of the late-nineteenth century.

In my view the John Cooper & Sons Building is more consistent with a contributory place, as defined in the study:

A 'contributory' heritage place is important for its contribution to a precinct. It is of historic, aesthetic, scientific, social or spiritual significance to the precinct. A 'contributory' heritage place may be valued by the community; a representative example of a place type, period or style, and/or combines with other visually or

stylistically related places to demonstrate the historic development of a precinct. 'Contributory' places are typically externally intact, but may have visible changes which do not detract from the contribution to the precinct.

This building's scale and frontage makes a contribution to the fine grain character of most of the built form in this block of Elizabeth Street. Its styling is not particularly significant, rather it is representative of commercial buildings of the late-nineteenth century.

The 'Guildford and Hardware Laneways Heritage Study Methodology Report' (May 2017) has revealed a relatively rich and diverse history in this part of central Melbourne, with some of this history expressed to varying degrees in its pre-World War II building stock. Efforts by the City of Melbourne to put in place controls to conserve and enhance this portion of Elizabeth Street, and its neighbouring laneways to the west, are to be encouraged.

The *Melbourne Planning Scheme* has recently adopted a three-tier grading system of heritage places (Significant, Contributory and Non-Contributory) and careful consideration needs to be given to what grading a building, place or element is given in this new system. The two definitions of the gradings (Significant and Contributory) that are used in this study, which are also used within the *Melbourne Planning Scheme*, have relatively minor differences in what is considered a 'significant' or a 'contributory' place.

Mitchell House is of architectural/aesthetic significance as a fine example of inter-war commercial architecture. St Francis Church, opposite the subject site (outside the proposed precinct boundary), has significance to this city as its earliest Catholic church, and as a place of social and spiritual significance to this city and its citizens. On a more modest scale, the bluestone rear façade in Heape Court of 303-305 Elizabeth Street, is a fine and relatively intact example of masonry warehouse/industrial architecture of the early years of the study area, and this is visually evident in its existing fabric.

Aerial view of the buildings that extend along the east side of Elizabeth Street, between Lonsdale and Little Lonsdale Streets (Source: Google Streetview).



This building at 287-289 Elizabeth Street is not a stand-alone building of significance, as are others that I have cited. It is not a building in this block that is known, used and/or valued by the community for its heritage values, as a significant building would be. Rather, in my view, its value is in its modest contribution to a relatively cohesive streetscape of fine grain pre-World War II commercial buildings that define the built form of this part of Elizabeth Street.

CONCLUSION

The building has a modest level of integrity, retaining most of its first-floor façade to Elizabeth Street, but like other buildings in this block its shopfront and original verandah has been removed. It sits well in a context of the fine grain built form that defines much of the block of Elizabeth Street between Lonsdale and Little Lonsdale Street, but is not a significant place in this part of the Elizabeth Street West Precinct. Rather, it contributes in terms of its scale, narrow street-frontage, and detailing, to a broader streetscape; and is no more significant than other buildings of a similar period and scale within this block.

It is on this basis that I recommend that the building is graded 'contributory' should the Elizabeth Street West Precinct proceed.

DECLARATION

I have made all the inquiries that I believe are desirable and appropriate, and that no matters of significance that I regard as relevant have to my knowledge been withheld from my evidence.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Peter Barrett', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Peter Barrett
Master of Architectural
History & Conservation (Melb).