

Expert Witness Statement by:
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For:

Planning Panels Victoria
Hearing

With regard to a site at
301 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne,
proposed for inclusion in the
Elizabeth Street West Precinct heritage overlay
as a 'Contributory' building to Heape Court,
as part of Amendment C271 of the
Melbourne Planning Scheme

Prepared for:
S V Hay (owner)

Instructions received from:
Simon Martyn (Fulcrum Urban Planning Pty Ltd)

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PREAMBLE

S V Hay, the owner of the subject site, 301 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 rear of this site as a 'Contributory' place in Heape Court in the proposed Elizabeth Street West Precinct heritage overlay.

A heritage assessment undertaken as part of the 'Guildford and Hardware Laneways Heritage Study 2017: identified an 'early bluestone wall' to be at the rear of this site. The study has since been revised, to note that the wall is on the adjacent site to the north at 303-305 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne. However, the altered elevation on the rear of the subject site is identified as a 'Contributory' place to the proposed Elizabeth Street West Precinct. The front of the site, described in the study as being of 1970s origin, is graded non-contributory.

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 rear portion of the building at 301 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne a 'Contributory' place 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.

I have been associated with a number of architectural exhibitions. In 2008, I was the curator of an exhibition at the City Museum in Melbourne called *The Impermanent City*. Other exhibitions that I have been involved with are *Re Built Environment* (2006), at the City Museum, and *Jet Age Melbourne* at the Town Hall Gallery (2015).

I am a mentor in the Australia ICOMOS Mentoring Program for students and early career heritage professionals.

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 an updated version of the document titled 'Guildford and Hardware Laneways Heritage Study 2017. Statements of Significance'. which 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 14 June 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 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 of the built form 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 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 facades of the buildings in this block of Elizabeth Street have varying levels of integrity, and changes to their facades on the upper levels detract from their original architectural character. This includes painting of brickwork, signage (both painted and fixed-signage), new fenestration, and awnings. Very few early 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 the east side of Heape Court, a right-of-way that extends to the south from Little Lonsdale Street. The lane 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 as the east side. Heape Court extends to the west at its south end, and further along the right-of-way it 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 301 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne (indicated with arrow).



The rear of the subject site (indicated with an arrow) viewed from Heape Court. Much of the nineteenth century fabric has been removed, altered or obliterated.



The building on the subject site is a significantly altered two-storey brick Victorian building. The building has had its original roof removed and replaced with a skillion roof clad in corrugated steel sheeting. This roof is concealed from Elizabeth Street by a plain parapet. The Elizabeth Street shopfront is of recent origin and of an oxidised steel frame or similar. Above this is a cantilevered awning that projects above the footpath. The Elizabeth Street facade of the first floor has had its original windows removed, and a large recessed framed window opening, divided vertically with timber sashes, has been fitted in recent years.

The rear elevation extends along Heape Court, and has had much of its original façade obliterated by unsympathetic alterations. These include the entire ground floor rebuilt in pressed brick with a panel above of steel frame glazing; enlargement of window openings on the first floor; and change to the first-floor door which has been replaced with a plywood or similar finish.

Internally the building has been significantly altered. The ground floor is now concrete and the stairs have been moved or reconfigured at some stage. The upper level has a timber frame floor, and a mezzanine has been added in recent years at the rear of the first floor. There are no finishes or fixtures visible of early origin.

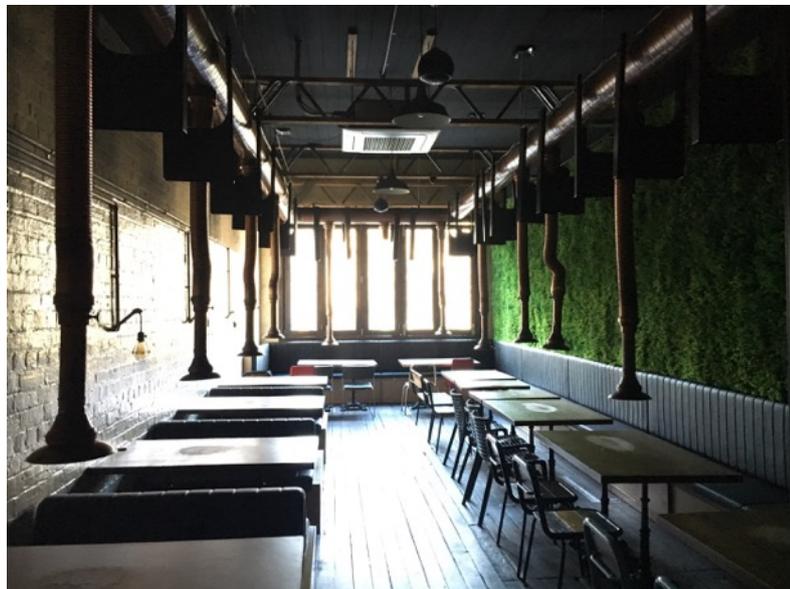
Heape Court, looking south from Little Lonsdale Street. The subject site is partially visible at left (indicated with an arrow).



*Elizabeth Street shopfront
of the building on the
subject site.*



*Interior of the first floor of
301 Elizabeth Street,
looking east.*



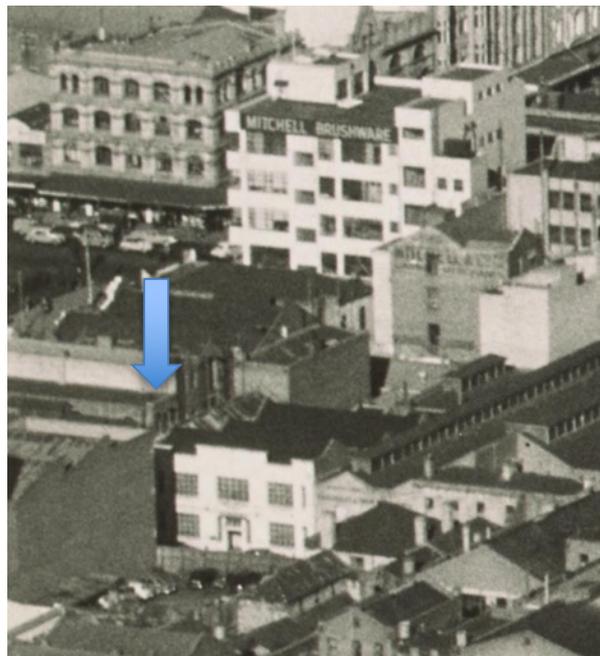
HISTORY

The building was erected in 1885, and was leased to the Planters Tea Bazaar (tea merchants).⁵ The building replaced an earlier single-storey building on this site. By 1891, Planters Tea Bazaar had vacated the premises, and over the next seventy years the building had a number of occupants and uses including bootmakers; Metter Bros stove and range makers; and J Roberts & Co, bicycle manufacturers.

View of the subject site in 1869 (indicated with an arrow), at this time occupied by a single-storey building. The existing building on the adjacent site (No's 303-305) is visible at left (Source of photograph: State Library of Victoria Picture Collection).



Aerial view looking towards the rear of the site c1945. The original fenestration on the rear elevation is still extant at this time (Source: State Library of Victoria Picture Collection).



The subject site (indicated with an arrow) and adjacent buildings on the west side of Elizabeth Street, in 1985. By this time, the façade had been stripped of its Victorian fabric and remodelled in a Modernist style (Source of photograph: City of Melbourne/Graeme Butler).



From the mid-1960s until at least the mid-1970s, the building was a Remington electric shaver shop. By 1985, the shopfront had been remodelled in its existing Modernist style, and was occupied by a café on the ground floor. The alterations to the rear elevation in Heape Court are also from the post-war period. The existing tenants of the building are a Korean restaurant.

ANALYSIS

It is proposed to include the subject site at 301 Elizabeth Street within the proposed HO1204 Elizabeth Street West Precinct, as part of Amendment C271 of the *Melbourne Planning Scheme*.

The front portion of the building, with the frontage to Elizabeth Street is identified as 'Non-Contributory' in the Property Schedule in the Elizabeth Street West Precinct citation in the 'Guildford and Hardware Laneways Heritage Study 2017' that is attached to 'Report to the Future Melbourne (Planning) Committee' (Planning Scheme Amendment C271 – Agenda Item 6.2) dated 15 May 2018.

In the same version of the previously mentioned Property Schedule, the rear of the building is noted as being 'Contributory' to Heape Court.

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 including Heape Court.

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

...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 laneways are also identified to be of aesthetic/architectural significance of the Elizabeth Street West Precinct, as the statement of significance notes (in part):

...Moving away from Elizabeth Street, the associated Zevenboom Lane, Heape Court and Somerset Place are also of aesthetic/architectural significance. These retain historic buildings which address the lanes, as well as those which contribute to the heritage character through their side or rear elevations. Valued development to the laneways ranges from the mid-nineteenth century through to the inter-war period, and is evident in a rich and diverse collection of factories, warehouses and workshops. Face red brick is the dominant material in the lanes, complemented by bluestone, rendered masonry and concrete.

In terms of Heape Court the statement of significance notes:

...is distinguished by its Victorian buildings and early fabric, and retains original bluestone kerbs, channels and flagstones.

Heape Court retains much of its early character, which is expressed in its single, double and three-storey industrial buildings and warehouses. Much of this built form is expressed in face red brick, and has modest levels of change that still allows its original architectural character to be interpreted. Complementing this is the bluestone pitched surface of the lane, absent in some other lanes of the Elizabeth Street West Precinct.

Unlike other nineteenth century buildings that back on to Heape Court, this two-storey building has undergone a series of alterations that have obliterated much of its original detailing and composition, and has removed a significant amount of its original fabric. The lower portion of the wall (ground level) is made of pressed brick and is of Post-war origin, and provides a poor interface between the private and public realm through its absence of fenestration.

The upper portion of the façade (first floor) has been significantly remodelled, and most of its masonry removed. It presents now with a large area of glazing, which is out of character with the punctuated wall openings found on the early buildings in Heape Court.

It is these qualities of simple brick elevations and punctured wall openings that are noted in the 'Key Characteristics' of the lane in the 'Guildford and Hardware Laneways Heritage Study 2017. Statements of Significance' (my notes in bold):

- *Contributory components of buildings to the laneways include original side and rear elevations (**original rear elevation obliterated**), as well as property frontages and facades (**Elizabeth Street façade removed**), simple brick elevations denote the back-of-house activities of the Elizabeth Street premises (**ground floor façade of post-war origin, and little of the original brickwork is extant on the first floor elevation**).*
- *Other contributory components of the laneway buildings include some original window and door openings and timber joinery (**mostly of twentieth century origin**); fenestration expressed as punched openings in masonry walls rather than large expanses of glazing (**no punctured wall openings, rather large expanses of fenestration**), with steel windows being more typical of the interwar buildings,*

chamfered corners; and hoists and crane beams which provide access to upper levels of warehouses (hoist and crane beam removed).

In contrast, adjacent built form retains much of this recognised character, containing red brick walls with punctured wall openings. Another example, recognised to be a significant place (HO1018), is the rear of 303-305 Heape Court, which has many of the key characteristics (hoist beam, punctured wall openings) but its elevation expressed in bluestone (over painted).

The building on the subject site is significantly altered, its Elizabeth Street frontage remodelled in a Modernist character, its hip roof removed and replaced with a flat roof, interiors removed of original finishes and detailing. Similarly, the rear elevation has been compromised in heritage terms through unsympathetic change, and its contribution limited to its scale and frontage. These are two relatively unremarkable attributes, and easily incorporated should new works occur at this site.

This building was initially identified as the rear of 301 Elizabeth Street. The study was amended in May 2018 to note that this building is immediately north, at 303-305 Elizabeth Street.



The rear of 291-293 Elizabeth Street, viewed from Heape Court, retains a significant level of early fabric, and the change that has occurred has not impacted upon interpreting its earlier character.



Rear of 301 Elizabeth Street, viewed from Heape Court.



A purpose of the heritage overlay, as defined by Clause 43.01 Heritage Overlay of the *Melbourne Planning Scheme*, is to enhance heritage places. Application of a 'contributory' grading on a façade that is an amalgam of elements through change over the years, much of mid-late twentieth century origin, will put unnecessary controls on this elevation and may prevent works that will provide an opportunity for the site to contribute to a greater degree to the character of Heape Court.

The rear of the subject site cannot be considered a contributory place, as defined by 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 present. 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.

The rear elevation of 301 Elizabeth Street is not externally intact. Nor has this change allowed for its early character to be interpreted. It is not representative of its place type, when compared with other buildings in Heape Court, and for these reasons cannot be considered of historic or aesthetic importance to Heape Court or the broader Elizabeth Street West Precinct.

CONCLUSION

A significant level of change has occurred to this building during the twentieth century. It retains little of its 1885 fabric and character, on both its Elizabeth Street and Heape Court elevations. In its altered condition, it provides no aesthetic value to the Elizabeth Street West Precinct.

I agree with the recommendation of the 'Guildford and Hardware Laneways Heritage Study 2017. Statements of Significance', in as much, that the Elizabeth Street frontage is of 'Non-Contributory' value. However, due to the change that has occurred also to the rear of the building in Heape Court, which has removed most of its original fabric and character, I recommend that if Amendment C271 is to proceed, that the Heape Court elevation be also graded 'Non-contributory'.

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.



Peter Barrett
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