

Expert Witness Statement by:
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For:

Planning Panels Victoria
Hearing

With regard to a site at
283-285 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 at 283-285 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 on this site as a 'two storey Victorian shop, altered' and to be of local historical significance to the proposed Elizabeth Street West Precinct. The 'Guildford and Hardware Laneways Heritage Study 2017', recommended that the site be graded 'Contributory'. On receipt of additional information on the site, from Melbourne Heritage Action, the City of Melbourne recommends the proposed grading be changed to 'Significant'.

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 283-285 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne as 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 professional 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 run 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 has been updated to include a statement of significance for this site at 283-285 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 Streets. 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 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 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 and is subject to a site-specific heritage overlay in the *Melbourne Planning Scheme* (HO715).

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) and awnings. Very little 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 and is subject to a site-specific heritage overlay in the *Melbourne Planning Scheme* (HO714).

The building on the subject site is a mid-nineteenth century brick two-storey commercial building, altered and partially demolished during the inter-war period, and altered again in structural rectification works in recent years.

The building has a hip roof reclad in corrugated galvanised steel sheeting, that is concealed by a parapet - the parapet itself altered. The ground floor shopfront is not original, and above this projects an awning of inter-war origin. On the upper level, three of the four original arched window openings are extant, but obscured by signage. The south portion of the façade and roof were demolished and rebuilt in 1937, to match the façade of Mitchell House also built that year. This newer portion of the building has a skillion roof.

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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

The subject site at 283-285 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne (Aussie Disposals). The building formerly had an additional bay where the single-storey section of Mitchell House is now built (indicated with the arrow).



The rear of 283-285 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne, viewed from Mitchell Lane). The two rear windows are most probably original, but recent rectification works have rendered the upper portion of this elevation, and other works have altered the lower portion of the façade.



An aerial view of the subject site viewed from Mitchell House. The roof of 283-285 has been reclad in corrugated steel in recent works. At right is the single-storey bay of Mitchell House, formerly the site of the south portion of the subject building, rebuilt in the 1930s with a new façade and a skillion roof (indicated with an arrow).



Interior of the first floor of 283-285 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne, where the Assembly Hall was formerly in the building.



The rear of the building is visible from Mitchell Lane, and is altered, the wall having been rendered in recent works to the building. Two plain arched windows, most probably original, are extant. The remainder of the rear of the building has been altered, and the sides of the building are obscured from the public realm by neighbouring buildings.

The interior of the building is relatively unremarkable. The ground floor has been rebuilt in concrete, and a steel frame constructed to support exterior walls in recent structural rectification works. The upper level retail space extends over the shop at No 281 (Mitchell House), and all floors on this level are timber frame. All visible finishes are of relatively recent origin, and the stairs have been relocated to the north boundary wall during the twentieth century. There is no visible evidence of its earlier use as a hall.

HISTORY

The subject site is part of Crown Allotment 8, Section 29, Town of Melbourne, which was purchased by Hugh Glass in 1846.⁴ In 1851, the Family and Commercial Hotel was built on a portion of Glass's land at the northwest corner of Elizabeth and Lonsdale streets,⁵ and in 1853 William Hockin purchased the site and this hotel.⁶ After acquiring further land in this block of Elizabeth Street, Hockin built the Assembly Rooms in c1857, which adjoined the hotel and occupied the subject site. The Assembly Rooms are described as having been a centre of Melbourne social life in the nineteenth century.⁷

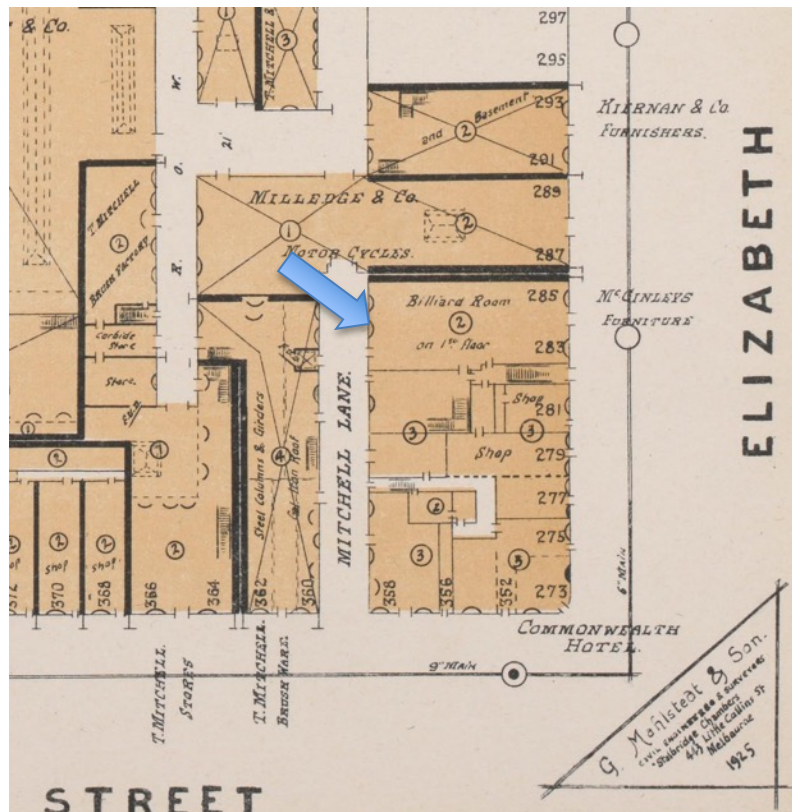
The Assembly Rooms continued to operate until around 1900,⁸ and were used for various social, cultural, political and commercial events. From 1906 until around 1917, the building served as the Socialist Party Hall.⁹ A 1925 Mahlstedt & Sons fire insurance plan shows that the building was occupied by McGinleys Furniture showrooms on the ground floor and a Billiard Room on the upper level.¹⁰ A fire in 1927, in which the fire brigade took one-and-a-half hours to extinguish, severely damaged the building.¹¹

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- 4 H E Badman et al, 'Plan of town of Melbourne 1837AD' dated 1892 (publication date), held by the State Library of Victoria. Certificate of title, vol 11144 fol 562.
5 *Herald*, 26 February 1937, p 14.
6 *Ibid.*
7 *Ibid.*
8 *Age*, 18 December 1900, p 10.
9 *The Socialist*, 14 February 1913, p 1. *Truth* (Melbourne), 24 February 1917, p 6.
10 Mahlstedt & Sons, 'City of Melbourne, Section 2, Version 1, 1925'.
11 *Geelong Advertiser*, 8 August 1927, p 2.

Drawing of a ball at Hockin's Assembly Rooms, which appeared in the Illustrated Melbourne News in 1858 (Drawing: Nicholas Chevalier). The view is most probably looking west, towards the rear of the hall (Source: State Library of Victoria Picture Collection).



A 1925 Mahlstedt & Sons fire insurance plan shows that the subject building (marked with an arrow) was occupied by McGinleys Furniture showrooms on the ground floor and a billiard room upstairs in the former hall. Note the original location of the stairs to the south of the hall in the now demolished portion.



An illustration of Mitchell House, as originally proposed. The building was designed to be taller and have a broader frontage to Elizabeth Street. Only six levels were built, and a shorter frontage to Elizabeth Street finished (Source of Photograph: Herald)



By 1932, this building was the city showroom of Malvern Star bicycles, a firm owned by Bruce Small Pty Ltd.¹² Bruce Small (1895-1980) would establish himself in the post-war period as a property developer in Victoria, and later (and more significantly) on the Gold Coast, Queensland.¹³

In 1936-37, the former Assembly Rooms was partially demolished (south portion) and rebuilt as a two-storey portion of Mitchell House. Mitchell House occupies the former site of the 1850s Family and Commercial Hotel at the northwest corner of Lonsdale and Elizabeth Streets. Mitchell House, designed by the eminent architect Harry Norris, but was never completed. Only six of its proposed ten-storeys were built, and a broad street-frontage along Elizabeth Street, which included the subject site, not completed.¹⁴ It is around this time when Mitchell House was built that the stairs of the subject building were rebuilt along the north boundary wall,¹⁵ and the façade remodelled.

12 *Sporting Globe*, 16 November 1932, p 11.

13 Robert I Longhurst, 'Small, Sir Andrew Bruce', in *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (online), retrieved 12 July 2018.

14 *Herald*, 26 February 1937, p 14.

15 Mahlstedt & Sons, 'City of Melbourne, Section 2, Version 1, 1925'.

Bruce Small Pty Ltd/Malvern Star occupied the building until at least the early 1970s.¹⁶ In 2013 the building underwent structural repairs, which gutted much of the interiors, demolished and rebuilt a portion of the Elizabeth Street façade and re-rendered the rear elevation. The exterior shell of the building was stabilised by pinning this back to an internal steel frame, and underpinning the bluestone foundation to a concrete strip footing within the site.¹⁷ The building is currently occupied on both levels by the camping goods retailer, Aussie Disposals.

ANALYSIS

It is proposed to include the subject site at 283-285 Elizabeth Street within the proposed HO1204 Elizabeth Street West Precinct, as part of Amendment C271 of the *Melbourne Planning Scheme*. The building is identified as an altered two-storey Victorian shop and was initially given a 'Contributory' grading in the Lovell Chen 'Guildford and Hardware Laneways Heritage Study Methodology Report' (May 2017).¹⁸

In the 'Report to the Future Melbourne (Planning) Committee (Agenda Item 6.2) it has noted that further research has shown that this site should have its grading changed from a 'Contributory' to a 'Significant' place in the Elizabeth Street West Precinct.¹⁹

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 boundaries are arbitrary, evident from the exclusion of the former Argus offices at the northwest corner of Elizabeth and Latrobe streets, which complements the fine collection of inter-war buildings further south within the Elizabeth Street West Precinct boundaries.

16 Sands & McDougall *Melbourne Directories*.

17 P J Yttrup & Associates Pty Ltd, Consulting Engineers, Project (Job) No 19811, Drawing No's S1-S6, dated, September 2011. FMSA Architects, 'Proposed Alterations and Upgrade Works', Drawing No 0606, dated 26 February 2013.

18 Lovell Chen, 'Property Schedule' in the 'Guildford and Hardware Laneways Heritage Study Methodology Report', May 2017, p 2.

19 City of Melbourne, 'Report to the Future Melbourne (Planning) Committee', Agenda Item 6.2, Planning Scheme Amendment C271 Guildford and Hardware Laneways Heritage, dated 15 May 2018, Point 5.

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 precinct meets Criterion A. It should be added, however, that the area served both people leaving for, and also arriving from, the goldfields (not only 'north-bound traffic'). The former Family and Commercial Hotel, now demolished, is an example of one of these businesses that was marketed at goldfields traffic.

Unlike other sites to the north in this block of Elizabeth Street, the rear of the site does not extend along Heape Court, rather its rear, now altered, faces Mitchell Lane. Although Mitchell Lane is within the Elizabeth Street West Precinct, the lane is not assessed in any significant degree in the 'Guildford and Hardware Laneways Heritage Study Methodology Report' (May 2017).

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 material (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 Elizabeth Street West Precinct meets these two criteria (Criterion D and Criterion E), however the aesthetic and architectural value of the subject building has been diminished by change to its fabric.

This change has occurred in at least two phases. The initial phase of change, in the inter-war period, demolished the southern bay of the building, which was rebuilt in a style that complemented the Moderne façade of Mitchell House. Around this time, the remaining portion of the façade was remodelled, with original detailing removed and the façade given a restrained Moderne style. It is most likely the boxed awning was built around this time also.

Photograph looking northwest at the intersection of Lonsdale and Elizabeth streets c1930. Visible at right (marked with the arrow) is the subject building showing its original four-bay composition of windows. In the foreground is the former Family and Commercial Hotel (Source of photograph: Melbourne Heritage Action Facebook page).



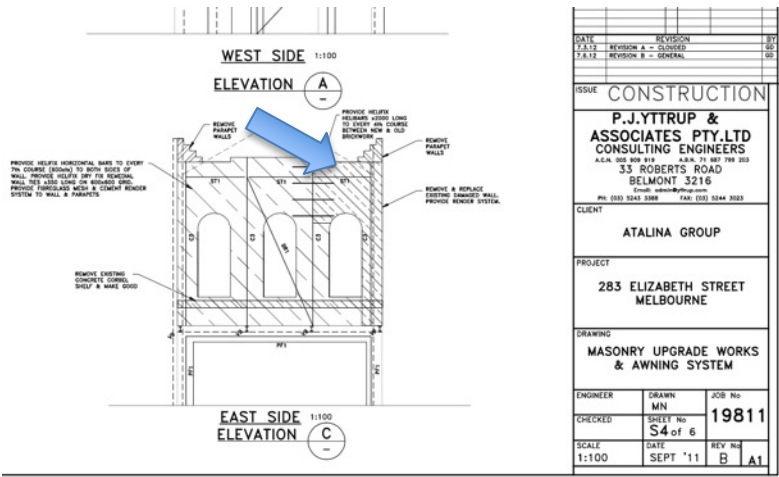
This photograph of the adjacent John Cooper & Sons building (No 287-289), shows some of the original detailing of the façade of the subject building at 283-285 Elizabeth Street (marked with an arrow), which was removed in inter-war remodelling of the façade (Source of photograph: Royal Historical Society of Victoria Collection).



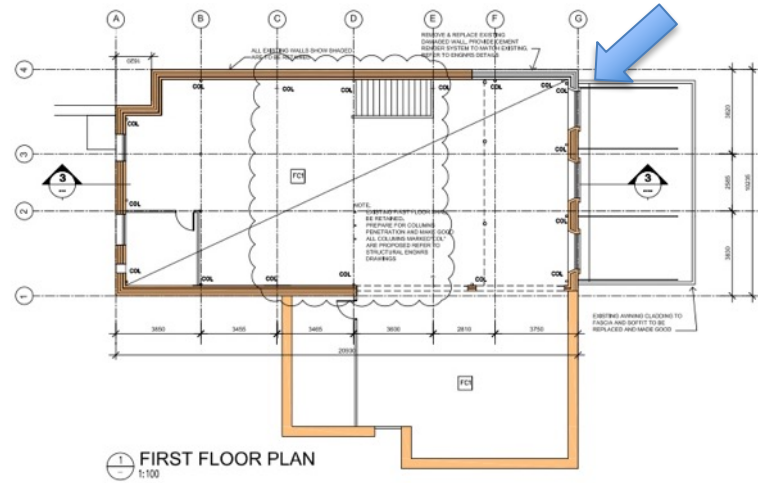
The subject site is partially visible in this c1945 image (indicated with an arrow), after the removal of its south bay (Source of photograph: State Library of Victoria Picture Collection).



A portion of the engineering drawings from the 2013 structural rectification works. The area double-hatched (indicated with an arrow) was rebuilt as part of the works, and the stepped parapet shown (of inter-war origin) removed (Source of drawing: FMSA Architects).



First floor plan from the 2013 works. The unshaded section of wall (indicated with an arrow) was the northeast corner of the building/facade that was rebuilt (Source of drawing: FMSA Architects).



NOTES:

A recent view of the subject building, prior to the existing signage being fixed to the façade. Visible are some mouldings and the box awning from the inter-war works (Source of photograph: Melbourne Heritage Action Facebook page).



Recent works to rectify structural issues have removed further fabric, and this includes the reconstruction of the northeast corner of the building including a portion of the first-floor façade. The works have also gutted much of the earlier interior including the removal of the ground floor which has been replaced with a concrete slab. The shopfront, as with most in the street, have been replaced at some time with new shopfronts.

A statement of significance has also been prepared for this building, which identifies it to be of local historical significance:

The former Assembly Rooms (283-285 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne) is of historical significance as a c1857 entertainment hall associated with a substantial gold rush era hotel (now demolished) on the main route north of the city, including the route to the Bendigo goldfields. It was the venue of numerous balls, dances and public meetings into the early twentieth century and operated as a place of gathering for the early Melbourne community. It was also the site of political meetings, and in the early twentieth century the building was occupied by the Victoria Socialist Party as a Socialist Hall.

Although altered, the building at 283-285 Elizabeth Street is additionally significant as a purpose-built gold rush entertainment venue, understood to be a rare surviving building type in the city.

Partial demolition of the building, and change that has occurred to its remaining fabric, has removed evidence of its earlier use as a hall.

The later commercial uses are varied, and consistent with the change in use of other buildings within this block over the years.

As an auxiliary space to the adjacent Family and Commercial Hotel, the demolition of that hotel building in the 1930s, has diminished an understanding of the subject building and its association to the former hotel.

A significant heritage place is defined in the 'Guildford and Hardware Laneways Heritage Study Methodology Report' (May 2017) 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.

Given the change that has occurred to the place, which has impacted upon its integrity, and diminished an understanding of its original use and association with a former hotel, it cannot be considered to be typical of this type of place (a hall), in as far as making a significant contribution to the Elizabeth Street West Precinct.

Rather, it shares similarities with the definition of a contributory place, defined in the study as:

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.

The building's scale and frontage, and its remnant external detailing (essentially limited to its first-floor arched windows on the front and rear) make a modest contribution to the fine-grain character of the built form in this part of the Elizabeth Street West Precinct. Its historical associations in its use as a hall are less evident. They are nevertheless there, but given the change that has occurred to its fabric, it cannot be held up to be a representative or typical example of this building type. Nor does it have interpretative value as a former venue of this type in the city in the mid-late nineteenth century.

This building's age (1850s) and some of its remaining fabric does contribute to its significance. However, this should not be a basis for a significant grading alone. To my knowledge other Gold Rush era buildings in the CBD which have experienced an equal level of change, are graded a contributory level of heritage value.

Within the Elizabeth Street West Precinct, the former Barry Hotel is extant opposite the General Post Office. It is visible in Charles Nettleton's photograph of this portion of Elizabeth Street in the 1860s. The hotel has been remodelled in a manner in the mid-twentieth century that has retained much of its fenestration pattern, when it was occupied by the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney. The rear bluestone elevation of the hotel is also intact. Despite being of a similar period to the Assembly Rooms, and retaining more fabric, it has been assigned a 'Contributory' grading in the 'Guildford and Hardware Laneways Heritage Study Methodology Report' (May 2017).

Another example, outside the study area, is the three-storey 1850s commercial building at the corner of Bourke and Russell Streets, which has been significantly altered, but has significant historical associations with the Hordern family (AKA Anthony Hordern & Sons – Sydney), and the Stanford family (San Francisco). That building was graded C in the 1993 'Central City Heritage Study Review', and has no grading listed in the 2017 Heritage Places Inventory.²⁰

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.

20 City of Melbourne, Revised Schedule of Buildings in the 'Central City Heritage Study Review: Final Report', p 23. City of Melbourne, 'Amendment C258: Heritage Places Inventory', corrected for re-exhibition, November 2017.

The former Barry Hotel, opposite the GPO in Elizabeth Street, is visible (indicated with an arrow) in this photograph of the street of c1870 (Source: State Library of Victoria Picture Collection)..



Former Barry Hotel, 201-213 Elizabeth Street, dating from the mid-nineteenth century, and later remodelled (Source: Google Streetview).



Stanford & Co, corner of Russell and Bourke Street (175 Bourke Street), Melbourne, built in the 1850s (Source of photograph: State Library of Victoria).



Former Stanford & Co building, 175 Bourke Street, corner Russell Street, in 2018. The building was graded C in the 1993 study, and is not included in the 2017 Heritage Inventory.



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



The *Melbourne Planning Scheme* has recently adopted a three-tier grading system of heritage places (Significant, Contributory and Non-Contributory). Careful consideration needs to be given to what grading a building, place or element is given in this new system. The two definitions 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.

In terms of significant heritage places, a number of these already exist within and in the immediate environs of the proposed Elizabeth Street West Precinct. When some buildings proposed for a significant grading, such as 283-285 Elizabeth Street, are compared with these existing ‘Significant’ graded buildings, they are pale in comparison.

Mitchell House is of architectural/aesthetic significance as a fine example of inter-war commercial architecture. St Francis Church, opposite the subject site, has historical 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 within the study area of the mid-nineteenth century, and this is visibly evident from its existing fabric.

This building at 283-285 Elizabeth Street is not of a similar level of significance as a stand-alone heritage building, as are the other examples I cite. In its altered condition, it is not one that is known, used and/or valued by the community for its heritage values. Rather, in my view its value is in its modest contribution to a relatively cohesive streetscape of pre-World War II commercial buildings that define the built form character of this part of Elizabeth Street.

CONCLUSION

This building at 283-285 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne has been partially demolished, and other fabric removed or altered/obliterated. Consequently, little is evident in its remaining fabric of its original use as a hall. The building in its altered state can only be considered to have contributory value to the Elizabeth Street West Precinct in terms of its scale and some remaining early detailing that complements other early buildings in this part of Elizabeth Street.

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.



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