SITE NAME	Royal Mail House
STREET ADDRESS	253-267 Bourke Street, Melbourne
PROPERTY ID	101138
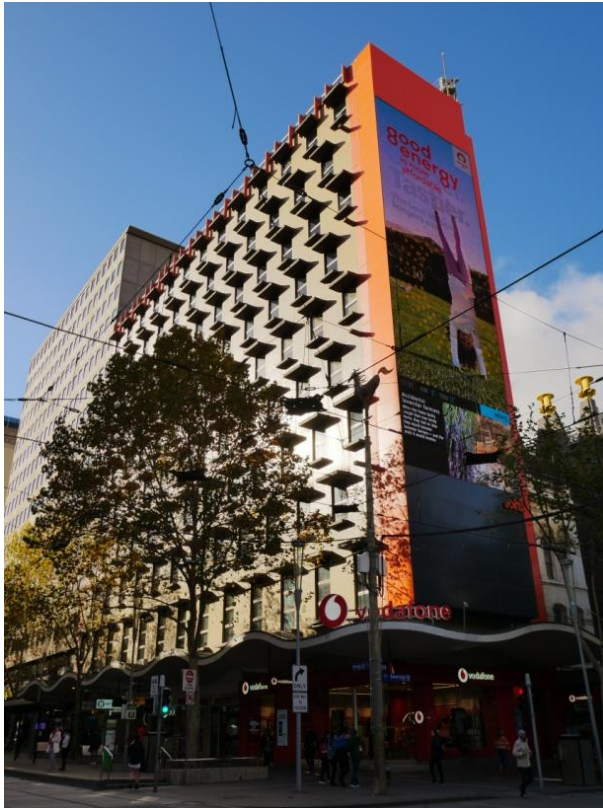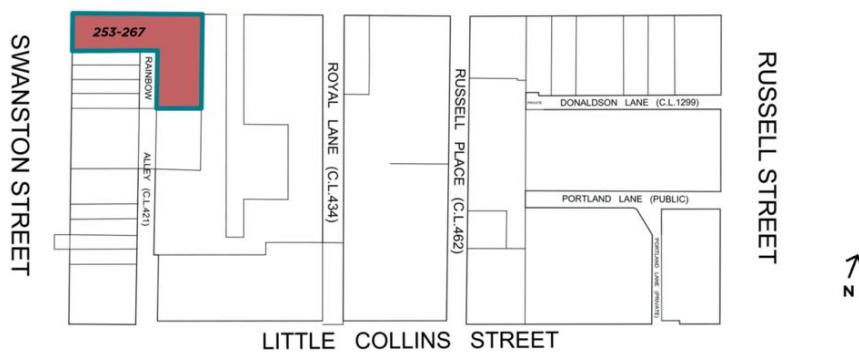
SURVEY DATE: October 2019		SURVEY BY: GJM Heritage	
HERITAGE INVENTORY	No	EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY	No
PLACE TYPE	Individual Heritage Place	PROPOSED CATEGORY	Significant
		FORMER GRADE	C
DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:	D Graeme Lumsden	BUILDER:	Lewis Construction Co Pty Ltd
DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:	1961-1963

CONTEXT

THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation focused on the postwar history of the site and did not address associations with Aboriginal people or organisations	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here

POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style
	1.9 Beyond the curtain wall
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Buiness and finance

LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Retail/Workshop, Office, Education, Hotel
1920s	Café/Restaurant, Merchant, Retail, Hotel
1960s	Café/Restaurant, Merchant, Office, Post Office, Telephone Kiosk

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Extent of overlay: To extent of property boundary

SUMMARY

Royal Mail House was designed by architect D Graeme Lumsden and constructed in 1961-1963 for owners, The Hammerson Group (also referred to as the Hammerson Property and Investment Co Ltd, London), who invested in retail developments.

CONTEXT

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

CONTEXT

Beyond the curtain wall

The dominant glass box design of the late 1950s was challenged in the 1960s as the shortcomings of the fully glazed curtain wall became apparent – in particular its poor thermal performance – and new technologies became available. Advances in concrete technology, including the development of precast concrete, impacted greatly on both the appearance and structure of the commercial tower form from the 1960s onwards.

By the mid-1960s, architects were experimenting with a range of solid cladding materials for tower buildings including precast concrete, stone, reconstituted stone, tile and brick, as well as various metals for cladding, screening and detailing. A number of buildings continued to adopt true curtain wall construction; however, a different aesthetic was created by the use of solid external cladding in place of the typically glazed spandrels of the 1950s. This aesthetic is evident in a number of existing buildings in the city centre including the Guardian Building at 454-456 Collins Street (1960-61), with its stone-faced precast concrete panelled facades.

Concrete advances saw an increase in the use of reinforced column and slab construction in 1960s multi-storey building design, however concrete-encased steelwork also continued to be used. Some buildings incorporated structural elements in their main facades (for example load-bearing precast concrete panels or structural mullions) so were therefore not of true curtain wall construction. The structural nature of these facades was not necessarily apparent to the observer and the buildings continued to display the well-established repetitive characteristics of the true curtain wall façade, such as at Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street, designed by Peddle Thorp & Walker in association with Meldrum & Partners (c1968-70).

A broad range of design approaches became apparent in multi-storey commercial buildings of the 1960s and early 1970s. The horizontality of curtain walling was often balanced by the addition of vertical elements such as façade columns, strips or fins, which introduced textural patterns and visual strength to the facades of a number of buildings. Other multi-storey towers clearly expressed their structure externally with grid-like facades which clearly reflected the internal trabeated structural system. Sun screening provided additional patterning to facades, either as a repetitive decorative motif across the façade, as an expression of the window frames (such as at Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street designed by D Graeme Lumsden, 1961-63), in the form of balconies (as at the Melbourne Office of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney building, 251-257 Collins Street, 1971-73), or occasionally as an entire screen attached to the exterior face of the building.

Buildings also varied with towers set within plazas or on dominant podiums. The State Savings Bank of Victoria at 45-63 Swanston Street, designed by Buchan Laird & Buchan (c1974), is one example of a building constructed with a dominant podium. Buildings were sometimes set back from the street line behind public plazas – a strategy adopted to gain council approval for additional building height and evident in the Bates Smart McCutcheon designed Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building at 359-373 Collins Street (c1972-1975) – while others were built within larger plaza spaces, such as the AMP Tower & St James Building Complex (1965-69), designed by US-based firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM).

Business and finance in the postwar period

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

CONTEXT

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17). Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

SITE HISTORY

Royal Mail House was designed by architect D Graeme Lumsden and constructed in 1961-1963 for owners, The Hammerson Group (also referred to as the Hammerson Property and Investment Co Ltd, London), who invested in retail developments (RAIA; BAP; *Cross-Section*, Nov 1962:3). The builders were Lewis Construction Co Pty Ltd (*Cross-Section*, Nov 1962:3). The site was formerly occupied by the nineteenth century Royal Mail Hotel (S&Mc).

The City of Melbourne received a building permit application for the present building in May 1961 (estimated to cost £203,000), with construction commencing that same month (BAI; *Canberra Times*, 23 May 1961:2). Various design revisions were lodged with Council up to November 1962 incorporating 'alterations and additional storeys' (increasing the project cost to £392,000) (BAI). Construction was paused for six months, resuming in November 1962, following the addition of three more floors to the design (*Cross-Section*, Nov 1962:3).

Architectural drawings dated September 1962 and February 1963 showed plans of the ground floor and elevational drawings (Figure 1 - Figure 3). The steel-framed building was designed with notable features such as a mosaic-tiled façade, 'chequer-board' patterned windows, stepped window surrounds and a curvilinear canopy to the ground-level shopfronts (*Cross-Section*, Nov 1962:3; NTAV 2014:38, 47). Goad (2012: 417) notes that the 'sinusoidal canopy' that wraps around the façade 'could have earned the label "featurist"' in Robin Boyd's 1960 publication, *The Australian Ugliness*. The ground-level comprised retail outlets, including a shop occupied by Telepost, advertised as

'Australia's first 24-hour self-service post office', which also served as a public telephone kiosk with 45 pay telephones (Figure 7 – Figure 9) (*Canberra Times*, 1 May 1964:25). The kiosk also served as the main entrance to the building (Figure 1).

Following completion, Royal Mail House was occupied by the Post Master General's Department and Department of Interiors, as recorded in the 1965 Sands & McDougall Directory (S&Mc). A series of photos dating to the mid-late 1960s (Figure 4 – Figure 9) show the completed building (bearing the name 'Royal Mail House' on the Swanston Street elevation; since removed), shopfronts and ground-level canopy.

Advertisements published in *The Age* in 1984 (11 Aug 1984:79) noted that the office space had been completely refurbished, to let to tenants. In recent years, the Bourke Street façade has been integrated into art installations, such as Alexander Knox's permanent seasonal winter installation 'Maxims of Behaviour', in 2008. In 2019, the western elevation has a large-scale advertising panel and the rooftop holds a billboard that appears to have been in situ in the 1980s. Part of the window surrounds have been removed from the Bourke Street elevation (date unknown).

D Graeme Lumsden, architect

Donald Graeme Lumsden was born in Malvern, Victoria in 1915. He enrolled in the architecture course at Melbourne Technical College (now RMIT) before transferring to the University of Melbourne. From 1938 to 1940 he studied at the university's Architectural Atelier, while simultaneously completing his articles in the office of A & K Henderson. By 1948, Lumsden had established his own private architectural practice, operating from premises in South Yarra (*Age*, 30 Nov 1948), where he specialised in the design of industrial complexes. A substantial number of his commissions were located in Tasmania where staff member, Ted Ashton, resided to oversee this branch of the practice.

Despite the focus on large industrial projects, Lumsden's practice also designed office buildings in central Melbourne in the 1960s, including Investment House at 116 Queens Street (1960) and Royal Mail House, at the corner of Bourke and Swanston streets (1961-63).

From 1970 to 1979, the firm was known as Lumsden, Ashton & Hale, before becoming Lumsden & Ashton following Bill Hale's departure. Lumsden closed the practice following Ashton's own departure sometime later.
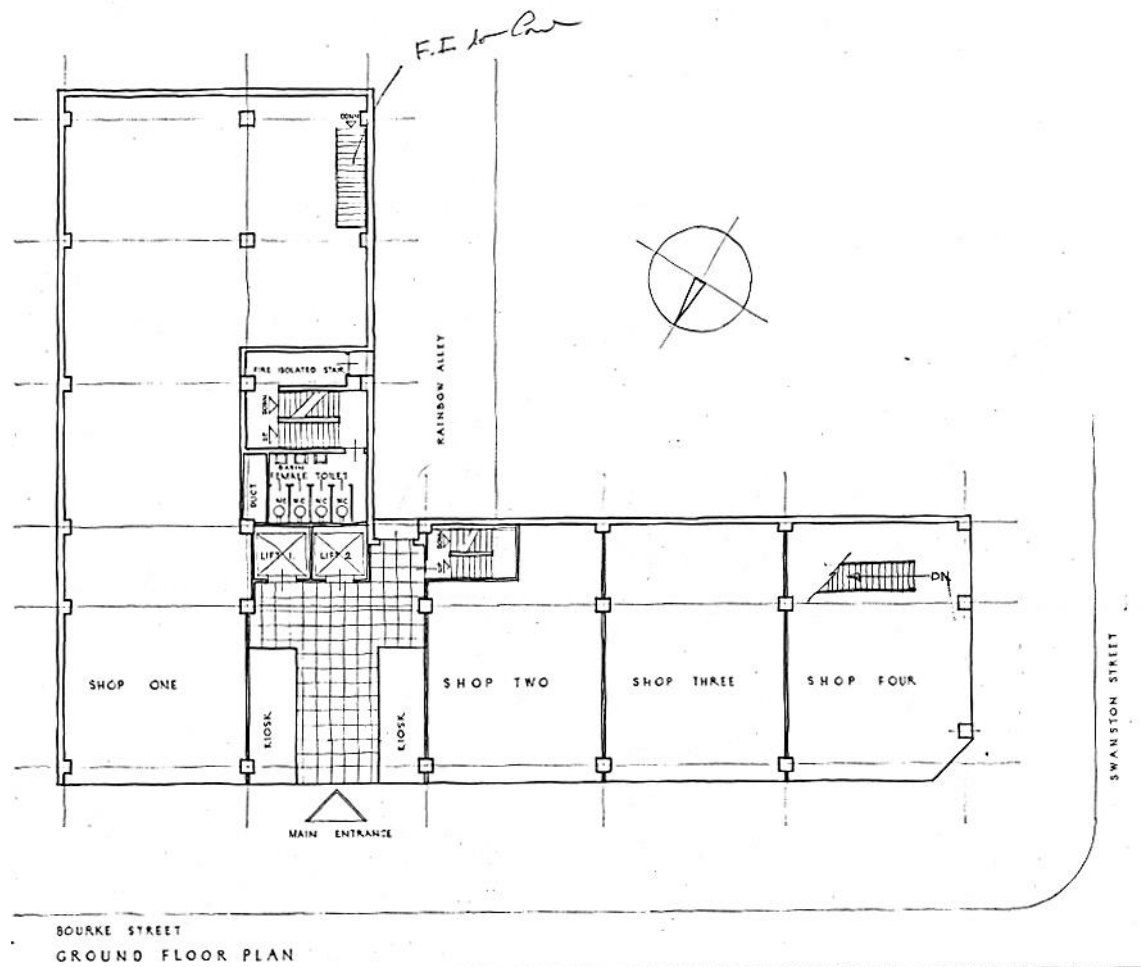
Figure 1. Ground floor plan by D Graeme Lumsden, dated September 1962 (BAP).
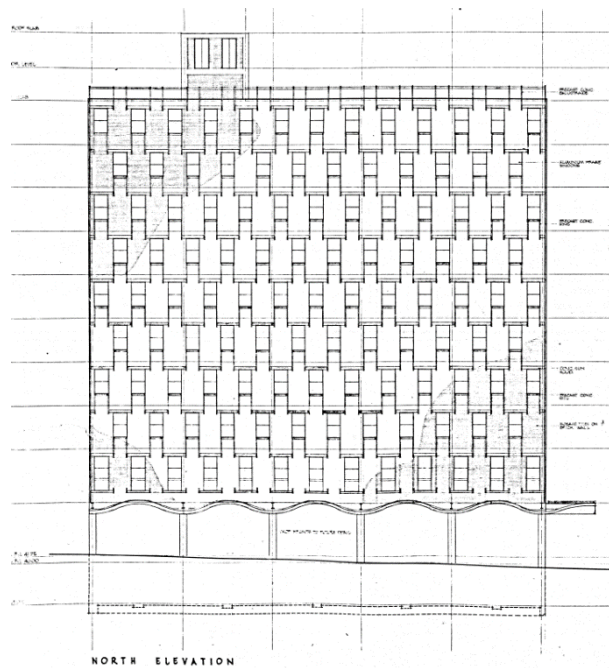

Figure 2. North elevation to Bourke Street. Drawing date stamped February 1963 (BAP).
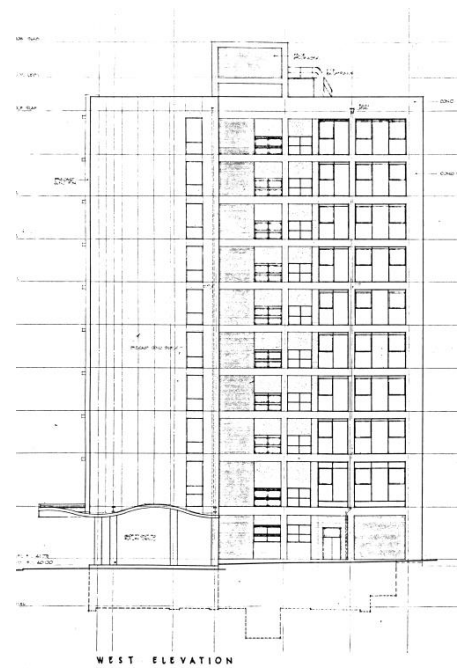
Figure 3. West elevation. Drawing date stamped February 1963 (BAP).

Figure 4. Royal Mail House in the final stages of completion in 1963 (NAA, Wells, photographer, A1200, L45445).

Figure 5. Detail of a 1966 photo showing the western end of the completed building (SLV, K. J. Halla, photographer, Image H36133/209).

CONTEXT

Figure 6. The completed building in 1967 (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H99.50/416).

Figure 7. A 1967 photo showing the shopfronts and soffit of the canopy (SLV, Wolfgang Sievers, photographer, Image H98.30/237).

Figure 8. The completed Telepost shop in the 1960s (NAA: B5919, 268).

Figure 9. Interior of the Telepost shop (NAA: B5919, 268).

Figure 10. Royal Mail House in the early 1980s (City of Melbourne Libraries online Heritage Collection, Reference no. Butler16291; photo dated 1982-1985).

SITE DESCRIPTION

Royal Mail House at 253-267 Bourke Street is a 9-storey commercial building located at the south-east corner of Bourke and Swanston streets. Constructed in 1961-63 to a design by D Graeme Lumsden, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

The building is L-shaped in form with a main broad frontage to the north, facing Bourke Street, a narrow façade fronting Swanston Street, and a north-south wing along the eastern boundary of the allotment. The latter is situated behind a row of four three-storey Victorian buildings which front Swanston Street. Rainbow Alley runs between the two to provide lane access to the buildings from Little Collins Street.

The building is of concrete encased steel column and beam construction with concrete parapet, east and south walls of concrete and face brickwork, and west wall of precast concrete panels. The latter presented a blank wall to Swanston Street with a single vertical strip of windows at the southern extremity (this entire façade appears to have been reclad recently and the strip of windows covered or

removed). The broad feature façade, facing Bourke Street, is a highly articulated curtain wall with rows of individual rectangular, aluminium framed windows set into a mosaic tile-clad wall of precast concrete panels. Deep projecting cast in-situ concrete sunhoods and precast concrete sills, supported on brick spandrels, provide definition to the otherwise frameless window openings. The resulting façade retains a highly patterned chequerboard appearance, despite the removal of concrete fins which connected the sunhoods and window sills above.

Royal Mail House is accessed at street level by a broad entrance in Bourke Street (originally an open arcade), which is flanked by retail outlets. Protection at street level is provided by a highly innovative undulating, cantilevered awning which lines both the Bourke Street and Swanston Street facades.

INTEGRITY

Royal Mail House at 253-267 Bourke Street, including the original form and the detailing of the exterior of the building above street level, remains highly intact to its original construction in 1961-63. Changes include the enclosing of the original arcade entrance and alterations to shop facades at street level, removal of the precast concrete fins from the Bourke Street façade and the recladding of the entire façade of the narrow west façade facing Swanston Street.

Overall, the building retains a high degree of architectural integrity to the Post-War Modernist style in fabric, form and detail. While the building has undergone alterations, these do not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the place as a fine example of a Post-War Modernist multi-storey office building.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Royal Mail House is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of 1960s to mid 1970s multi-storey commercial building design. Located on a prominent corner site, the building's broad feature façade and highly distinctive undulating cantilevered verandah at street level, can be clearly observed from both Bourke and Swanston streets. Despite removal of the vertical window fins, changes at street level and the recladding of the narrow west façade, Royal Mail House remains highly intact to its original design.

There are a number of buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to Royal Mail House. These are detailed below.

State-significant places

A small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne have been assessed as being of State-level significance and are included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). These include:

- Total House, 170-90 Russell Street (Bogle & Banfield 1964-65; VHR H2329 & HO1095)
- Former Hoyts Cinema Centre, 134-44 Bourke Street (Peter Muller 1966-69)
- Victorian Government Offices, Treasury Reserve Precinct (Yuncken Freeman 1967-68 – outside the Hoddle Grid)
- Eagle House, 473 Bourke Street (Yuncken Freeman 1971-72; VHR H1807 & HO901)
- BHP House, 130-148 William Street (Yuncken Freeman 1969-72; VHR H1699 & HO767).

CONTEXT

Locally-significant places

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from this period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme on a permanent basis. Those that are, are generally currently included within Heritage Precincts but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places, as follows:

Precinct Heritage Overlay

Former Reserve Bank of Australia, 56-64 Collins Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1964-66) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.

Former State Savings Bank of Victoria, 45-63 Swanston Street, (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1974) included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct (Non-contributory).

Wales Corner, 221-231 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1964-66) included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Swanston Street) Collins East Precinct as a Contributory place.

Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, 251-257 Collins Street, (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 19741-73 included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Flinders Lane) (Non-contributory).

CONTEXT

One individual heritage place recently included in a site-specific Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis is the Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1966) (HO1213):

Scottish Amicable Building, 128-146 Queen Street

Other examples

Despite the demolition of many 1960s and 1970s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the advancement of construction techniques from the 1960s through to the mid 1970s and demonstrate the broad range of design approaches of the period. The podiums of the majority of these places have been modified at street level. Examples include:

Former RACV Club, 111-129 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961) (Interim HO1068)

Former Australia Pacific House, 136-144 Exhibition Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1975-78)

CONTEXT

Royal Insurance Group Building, 430-442 Collins Street, (Yuncken Freeman, 1965) (Interim HO1010)

Office Building, 516-520 Collins Street (architect unknown, c1974)

Former Guardian Building, 454-456 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1960-61)

Former South British Insurance Company Ltd Building, 155-161 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1961-62)

Former State Savings Bank, 258-264 Little Bourke Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1961)

MLA Building, 308-336 Collins Street (Stephenson & Turner, 1963)

CONTEXT

Office Building, 178-188 William Street (McIntyre McIntyre & Partners, 1972-73)

Former Sleigh Corner Building, 158-164 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1964)

The Former Houston Building, 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kolle & Associates, 1965)

AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street (Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1965-69)

Former Dalgety House, 457-471 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp & Walker, 1966-68)

Former State Saving Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1967-68)

Former Legal & General House, 375-383 Collins Street (B Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking, 1967)

Former AMP Building, 344-350 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton and Lobb, 1966-68)

Equitable House, 335-349 Little Collins Street (unknown architect, 1968)

Former Australia-Netherlands House, 468-478 Collins Street (Meldrum & Partners with Peddle Thorp Walker, 1968-70)

Former Methodist Church Centre, 130-134 Little Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1966-67)

Cowan House, 457-469 Little Collins Street (E & G Kolle, 1969)

CONTEXT

Lonsdale Exchange, 447-553 Lonsdale Street (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1969)

Former Dillingham Estates House, 114-128 William Street (Yuncken Freeman, 1976) (Interim HO1180)

Former Bryson Centre, 174-192 Exhibition Street (Perrot Lyon Timlock & Kesa, 1970-72)

Former Commonwealth Banking Corporation Building, 359-373 Collins Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, c1972-75)

Nubrick House, 269-275 William Street (Buchan Laird & Buchan, 1972)

Former Law Department Building, 221-231 Queen Street (Fischer Group, 1972)

Former National Bank of Australasia Stock Exchange Branch, 85-91 Queen Street (Meldrum & Partners, 1973)

Former MLC Building, 303-317 Collins Street (Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, c1970-1973)

Office Building, 589-603 Bourke Street (Peddle Thorp de Preu, 1973-75)

Analysis

As a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building, Royal Mail House at 253-267 Bourke Street clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey commercial buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne. Similar to the small number of 1960s to mid 1970s buildings presently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme – and a number of other examples identified above – Royal Mail House clearly demonstrates this class of place.

CONTEXT

ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✔	**CRITERION A** Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).
	CRITERION B Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).
	CRITERION C Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).
✔	**CRITERION D** Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).
	CRITERION E Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).
	CRITERION F Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical 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 (social significance).
	CRITERION H Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an Individual Heritage Place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-4)	No
INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

OTHER

N/A

CONTEXT

REFERENCES

Contextual History references contained within *City of Melbourne Hoddle Grid Heritage Review: Postwar Thematic Environmental History 1945-1975*

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The Age.

The Canberra Times [A.C.T.]

PREVIOUS STUDIES

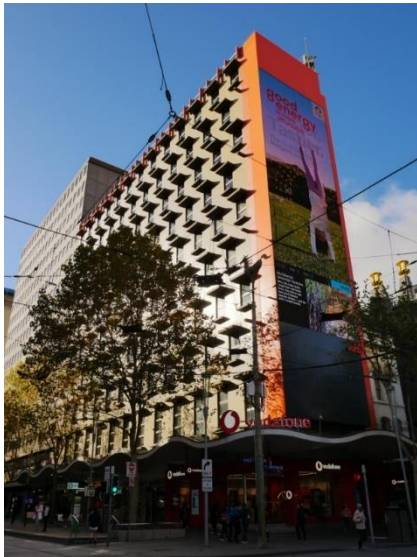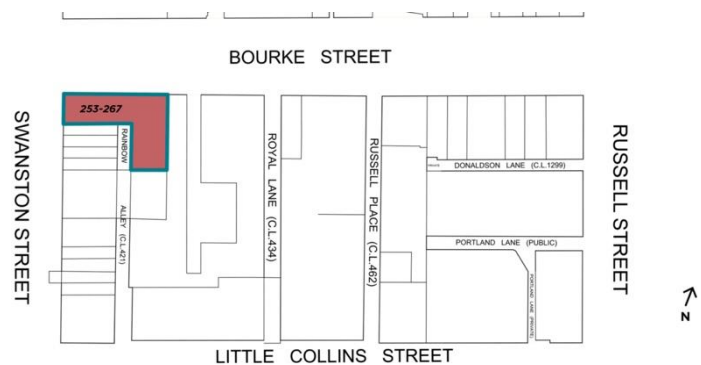|	
Central Activities District Conservation Study 1985	D
Central City Heritage Review 1993	C
Review of Heritage overlay listings in the CBD 2002	Ungraded
Central City Heritage Review 2011	Ungraded

CONTEXT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Royal Mail House	**PS ref no:** HOXXXX

What is significant?

Royal Mail House, 253-267 Bourke Street, a multi-storey office building constructed in 1961-63.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing
- The building's high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations made to the street level facades and the west façade facing Swanston Street are not significant.

How it is significant?

Royal Mail House at 253-267 Bourke Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

Constructed in 1961-63 to a design by D Graeme Lumsden, Royal Mail House has a clear association with the postwar building boom which transformed central Melbourne into a modern high-rise city. The design of these commercial buildings from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s – many of which were architect designed – was driven by the commercial demands and the prestige afforded by a dominant city presence (Criterion A).

Royal Mail House is a fine and highly intact representative example of a Post-War Modernist commercial building. The building strongly reflects the style which was popular in the 1960s to the mid 1970s, particularly in central Melbourne. Constructed as a 9-storey building on a prominent CBD corner site, Royal Mail House clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a 1960s to mid 1970s structure, particularly the broad feature façade comprising a highly articulated curtain wall of solid appearance and

CONTEXT

distinct bands of windows with dominant hoods and sills that are set in a regular pattern across the entire wall, as well the highly distinctive undulating cantilevered verandah at street level and the use of materials such as mosaic tiles and precast concrete panels. These demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style (Criterion D).

Primary source

Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)