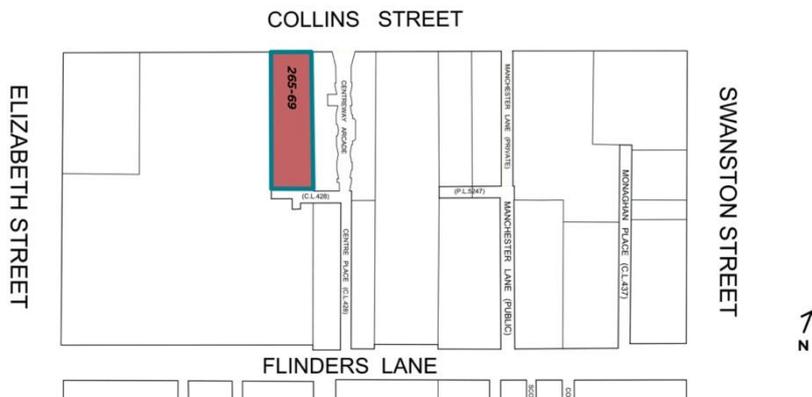


SITE NAME	Former Bank of Adelaide Building
STREET ADDRESS	265-269 Collins Street, Melbourne
PROPERTY ID	102085



SURVEY DATE: October 2019

SURVEY BY: GJM Heritage

HERITAGE INVENTORY	No	EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY	HO502
PLACE TYPE	Individual Heritage Place	PROPOSED CATEGORY	Significant
		FORMER CATEGORY	Contributory
DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:	Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb	BUILDER:	E A Watts Pty Lt
DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:	1959-1960

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
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Buiness and finance

LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Bank, Office, Studio, Retail, Residence
1920s	Bank, Office, Retail/Service, Studio, Caretaker
1960s	Bank

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

The Former Bank of Adelaide Building was designed by architects and engineers Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb to serve as the Melbourne headquarters for the Bank of Adelaide. It was constructed in 1959-1960 by E A Watts Pty Ltd.

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.

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.

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

The Former Bank of Adelaide Building was designed by architects and engineers Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb to serve as the Melbourne headquarters for the Bank of Adelaide (BAP; *Cross-Section*, May 1959:3). It was constructed in 1959-1960 by E A Watts Pty Ltd (*Cross-Section*, May 1959:3; *Age*, 8 Apr 1959:1).

The Bank of Adelaide had occupied the site of the existing building from 1920 (S&Mc; *Age*, 8 Apr 1959:1). In August 1958 the bank announced its temporary residency at 319 Collins Street, during the demolition of the bank's old premises and construction of a new building at the site (*Age*, 16 Aug 1958:4). The earlier building was demolished in September 1958 (*Age*, 8 Apr 1959:1).

Architectural drawings dated October 1958 show the north (Collins Street) elevation and the design of the original entrance with its glazed aluminium entrance screen and granite facing surrounds.

Annotations to the drawings indicate that the north elevation was designed as an 'anodised aluminium curtain wall' with marble spandrels, stone surrounds and granite edging. The stairwell at the east side of the façade was designed with fixed glazing and marble spandrels (Figure 1). The layout placed the

banking chamber on the ground floor, bank offices on the first floor, and office spaces to let on the remaining floors (Figure 2) (BAP).

The City of Melbourne received a building permit application for the new building in January 1959 (with an estimated total cost of £570,000) (BAI). The development was subsequently discussed in contemporary newspapers and architectural publications. The *Age* reported in April 1959 that construction of the 11-storey building had commenced (Figure 3) stating,

The new building, one of the most modern occupied by a bank in Melbourne, will take advantage of the recent modifications in the building code, and will cover the maximum area permitted on a site of its size.

The article stated that, at 154 feet tall, the building was to be the first building in the central city area to exceed the old height limit of 132 feet (40m) (*Age*, 8 Apr 1959:1).

In May 1959, the University of Melbourne publication *Cross-Section* reported on the new Melbourne headquarters for the Bank of Adelaide that was under construction. It noted that the building would be Victoria's first major building using concrete with a light-weight aggregate (*Cross-Section*, May 1959:3). The new lightweight aggregate, 'Shalite', produced structural concrete to specified strength and almost half the weight. The aggregate was used on various contemporary buildings including the subject site (*Age*, 4 May 1960:9).

The groundfloor shopfront has been altered at various stages (Figure 6).

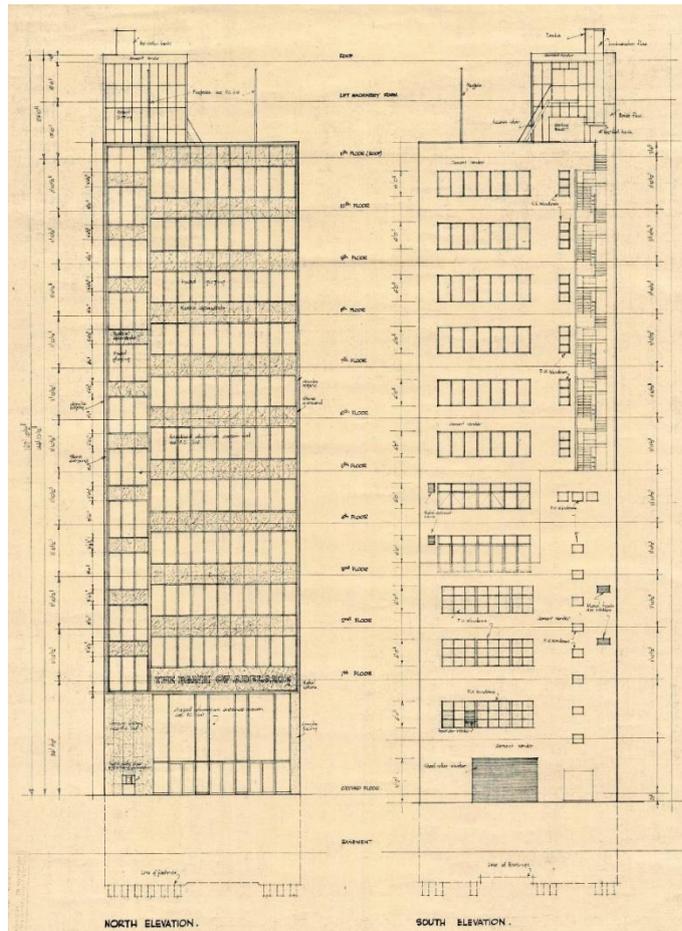


Figure 1. North (Collins Street) and south elevations. Drawings by Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, dated October 1958 (BAP).

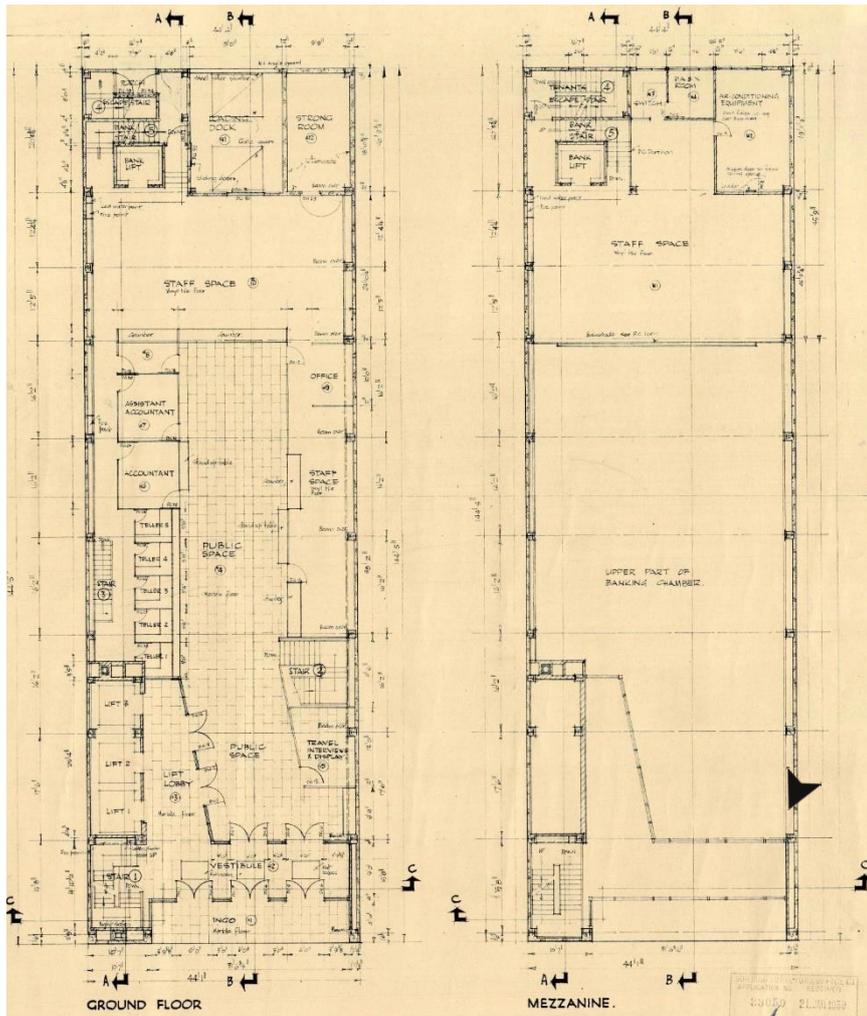


Figure 2. Ground and mezzanine floor plans, occupied by the bank. Drawings by Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, dated October 1958 (BAP).

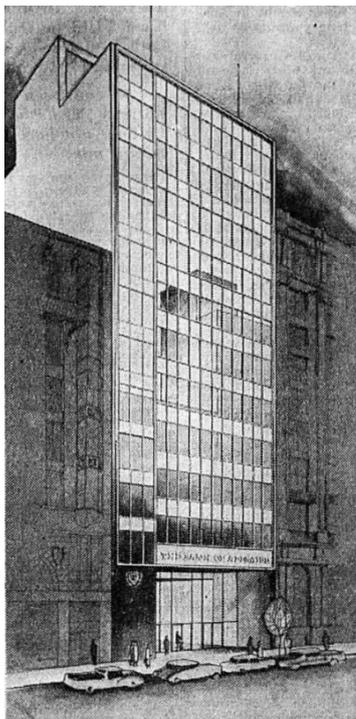


Figure 3. Illustration of the building, published in *The Age* in April 1959 (*Age*, 8 Apr 1959:1).



Figure 4. Bank of Adelaide in 1960 (SLV, Mark Strizic, photographer, Image H2011.55/1445).



Figure 5. Detail of a photo taken 1960 (SLV, Mark Strizic, photographer, Image H2011.55/1462).



Figure 6. The building in 1984 with an altered ground floor shopfront (City of Melbourne Libraries online Heritage Collection, Reference no. Butler13528).

Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, architects

Godfrey and Spowers was established in c1901 by architects, William Scott Purves Godfrey and Henry Howard Spowers. The firm designed a large number of houses, warehouses and institutional buildings and was best known for its bank building designs.

Godfrey's son, William Purves Race Godfrey, joined the practice in 1931 as a student. Spowers died the following year and Race Godfrey was made partner in c1934. The firm was suspended in 1941 as a direct result of World War II, during which time Race Godfrey worked with the RAAF as a civilian architect in Melbourne and Sydney and his father, William Godfrey, carried out commissions for air-raid shelters. Race Godfrey recommenced practice late in 1944. His father did not continue with the new firm, and retired from practice in the same year.

By the early 1950s, Race Godfrey expanded the firm to include new partners, Eric Hughes, Geoffrey Mewton and John Lobb, becoming Godfrey, Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb. The expanded firm specialised in large office and institutional buildings. Notable commissions within central Melbourne included the Allans Building at 278 Collins Street (1959), the Bank of Adelaide Building, 265-69 Collins Street (1959-60), the AMP Building, 344-50 Collins Street (1966-68) and the State Savings Bank of Victoria, 233-43 Queen Street (1967-68). The National Mutual Building, Collins Street, Melbourne (1962-5, demolished 2015) was a key work for the firm during this period.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The Former Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street is an 11-storey commercial building located on the south side of Collins Street between Elizabeth Street and Swanston Street. Constructed in 1959-60 to a design by Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, the multi-storey building is an example of the Post-War Modernist style.

Rectangular in plan, the building has a narrow frontage to Collins Street and rear access is via a laneway from Flinders Lane. The Modernist design of the Collins Street façade is emphasised by the substantial classically-inspired early twentieth century buildings which flank the building. Located on the opposite side of Collins Street is the similarly Modernist-styled Allans Building which was designed by the same architects in 1956-57.

The building is of concrete encased steel column and beam construction with the Collins Street façade presenting as a tall, narrow and transparent curtain wall of anodised aluminium framing with alternating rows of fixed glazing and solid spandrels. Stone surrounds frame the individual window and spandrel panels, forming continuous vertical and horizontal lines across the front façade.

Unlike the majority of glazed curtain wall buildings of the period, the front facade combines two curtain wall sections which vary in dimension and create an asymmetrical composition. An internal staircase to the east is distinguished from the remainder of the front facade by the use of smaller spandrels which align with the centre of the window banding of the main curtain wall, creating a subtle staggered effect. Original architectural drawings indicate that the spandrel panels were to be clad in marble. It is difficult to identify the material used in the main spandrels and it appears that the smaller spandrel panels to the east may have been re-clad.

Continuous vertical elements run from above street level to the top of the building across the entire façade, creating a grid-like pattern between slim granite-clad concrete side walls and the top parapet which frames the composition. In both sections of curtain walling, the alternating horizontal bands are

of different height, with taller window bands resulting in rectangular glazed units and spandrels of square proportion.

The rear wall of the building is of cement rendered concrete and contains a number of fixed window units.

Modifications have been made to the front façade below the first-floor strip of glazing. This includes removal of the original glazed entrance screen, granite facing and first floor spandrel. Recent framing has been inserted into this façade at street level.

INTEGRITY

The Former Bank of Adelaide Building, including the original form and detailing of the exterior of the building above street level, remains highly intact to its original construction of 1959-60. Works to the front of the building at street level has altered the original design of this frontage.

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 at street level, 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

The Former Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of a 1950s multi-storey commercial building design. The building's transparent grid-like curtain wall façade, with alternating rows of aluminium-framed glazing and opaque spandrels and vertical mullions, can be clearly observed from Collins Street. The curtain wall façade is unusually divided into two unequal vertical parts – both comprising alternating rows of fixed glazing and opaque spandrels, and stone framing which forms a grid of continuous vertical and horizontal lines across the two individual sections of the front façade. Despite the redesign of the façade at street level, the upper facades of the Former Bank of Adelaide Building remain highly intact to their original design.

There are a number of buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne which were constructed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the Former Bank of Adelaide Building. These are detailed below.

State-significant places

A comparative example in the City of Melbourne which is located immediately adjacent to the Hoddle Grid is ICI House, 1-4 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1958). This place is included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR H0786).

Locally-significant places

Precinct Heritage Overlay

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from the early postwar period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme. Those from the 1950s that are included in the Heritage Overlay are currently included as part of Heritage Precincts, but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places. These places are:



Former Gilbert Court, 100-104 Collins Street (John A La Gerche, 1954-55) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Hosie's Hotel, 1-5 Elizabeth Street & 288-290 Flinders Street (Mussen McKay & Potter, 1954-55), included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct as a Significant place.



Coates Building, 18-22 Collins Street (John A La Gerche, 1958-59) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Allans Building, 276-278 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton & Lobb, 1956-1957) included in HO502 The Block Precinct as a Significant place.

Other Examples

Despite the demolition of many 1950s 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 initial period of curtain wall construction in Melbourne and demonstrate similar characteristics to the subject building. The following examples are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places as part of the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review:



Lauren's House, 414-416 Lonsdale Street (Harold Bloom, 1956) (Interim HO1254).



Former Atlas Assurance Building, 404-406 Collins Street (H Garnet Alsop & Partners, 1958-61) (Interim HO1008).



Former London Assurance House, 468-470 Bourke Street (B Evans & Partners, 1960) (Interim HO1006).



Former AMP Building, 402-408 Lonsdale Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1956-59).



Former Ajax House, 103-105 Queen Street (HD Berry, 1956).



HC Sleigh Building, 166-172 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1953-55).



Coles & Garrard Building, 376-378 Bourke Street (Meldrum & Noad, 1957).



Canton Insurance Building, 43-51 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1957).



Former Batman Automatic Telephone Exchange, 376 Flinders Lane (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1957).

Analysis

As a fine and highly intact representative example of its type, the Former Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street clearly demonstrates an important phase in the architectural development of multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne. Similar to the small number of 1950s buildings presently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme – and a small number of other examples identified throughout the Hoddle Grid and listed above – the Former Bank of Adelaide Building clearly demonstrates this class of place.

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

REFERENCES

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

Building Application Index (BAI), City of Melbourne.

Building Application Plans (BAP), City of Melbourne.

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Cross-Section: No. 79, May 1959.

Goad, Phillip, Ed. (2003), *Judging Architecture*, Royal Australian Institute of Architects (Victoria).

Murphy, Guy & Bryce Raworth (2012), 'Godfrey & Spowers' in Philip Goad & Julie Willis's (Eds.) (2012), *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Port Melbourne.

National Trust of Australia, Victoria (NTAV) (September 2014), *Melbourne's Marvellous Modernism, A Comparative Analysis of Post-War Modern Architecture in Melbourne's CBD 1955 -1975*.

Sands & McDougall Directories (S&Mc).

State Library of Victoria (SLV), picture collection, images and photographers as cited.

The Age.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

**Central Activities District
Conservation Study 1985** E

**Central City Heritage
Review 1993** C

**Review of Heritage
overlay listings in the
CBD 2002** Ungraded

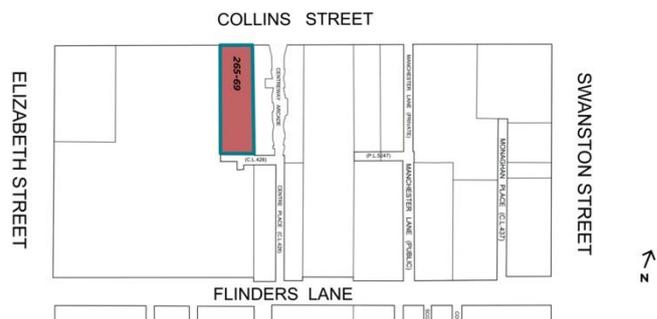
**Central City Heritage
Review 2011** Ungraded

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Former Bank of Adelaide Building



PS ref no: HOXXXX



What is significant?

The Former Bank of Adelaide Building, 265-269 Collins Street, a multi-storey office building constructed in 1959-60.

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 facade are not significant.

How it is significant?

The Former Bank of Adelaide at 265-269 Collins Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

Constructed in 1959-60, to a design by Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb, the Former Bank of Adelaide Building 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 prestige afforded by a dominant city presence. The Former Bank of Adelaide Building was constructed as one of the first buildings to exceed the pre-existing 40m (132 foot) height limit within the Melbourne CBD (Criterion A).

The Former Bank of Adelaide Building 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 1950s, particularly in central Melbourne, incorporating a curtain wall street facade. The transparent front façade of alternating rows of aluminium-framed glazing and opaque spandrels, and vertical mullions which divide the façade into a grid-like pattern, demonstrate important aspects of the Post-War Modernist style. The incorporation of two contrasting grids in the front façade is unusual and distinctive (Criterion D).

Primary source

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