| SITE NAME	Former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Building and plaza with 'Children's Tree' Sculpture
STREET ADDRESS	308-336 Collins Street, Melbourne
PROPERTY ID	102137
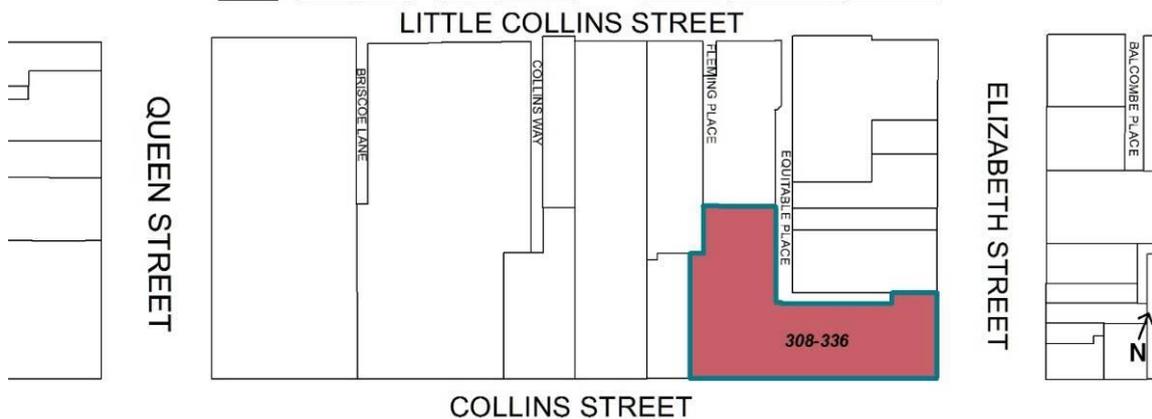
SURVEY DATE: October 2018		SURVEY BY: Context	
HERITAGE INVENTORY	Not provided	EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY	No
PLACE TYPE	Individual Heritage Place	PROPOSED CATEGORY	Significant
		FORMER GRADE	C
DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:	Stephenson & Turner (building) Tom Bass (sculpture)	BUILDER:	Not known
DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:	1963

THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any 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 Business and finance

LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Offices
1920s	Offices
1960s	Offices

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

Extent of overlay: Refer to map

SUMMARY

The former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Building at 308-336 Collins Street, opened in 1963. It was designed by architects Stephenson & Turner and constructed by Lewis Construction Co Pty Ltd. The building was set back to create a 'pedestrian precinct' and a commissioned sculpture by artist Tom Bass, 'Children's Tree' was installed in the forecourt of the building facing Elizabeth Street as part of the design.

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.

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

Prior to the present building, the subject site on the key city corner of Elizabeth and Collins streets was occupied by the Equitable Building, built between 1891 and 1896 (MV 2018a) (see Figure 1). The Equitable Life Assurance Society (USA) paid £360,000 for the site in 1890, towards the end of the economic boom of the 1880s (MV 2018a). The Equitable Life Assurance Society had wanted to build 'the grandest building in the Southern Hemisphere', and commissioned the large structure to a design by American architect, Edward Raht. The building was constructed by David Mitchell (MV 2018a) and the Equitable Life Assurance Society owned the building until 1923, when it sold it to the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society (MV 2018a).

The Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society was founded in Melbourne in 1873, and by 1874 had established offices in other Australian cities. Offices in British colonial outposts, such as New Zealand and South Africa, followed (MV 2018b). By the late 1950s, new headquarters were required by the Society. Consequently, the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society demolished the Equitable Building at the corner of Elizabeth and Swanston streets and constructed the current office block (MV 2018b). Parts of the old Equitable Building can be found in various locations around Melbourne, with Harcourt granite blocks situated outside the Melbourne Museum, and the statuary above the portico moved to the grounds of the University of Melbourne (MV 2018a).
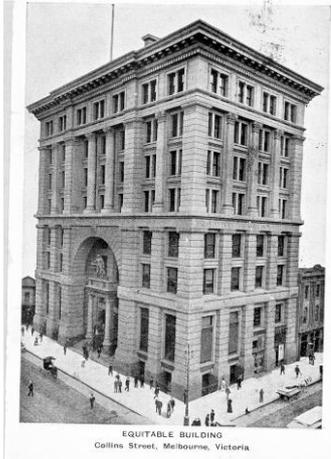
Figure 1. The Equitable Building, which stood on the subject site (Source: General sequence postcard 1906, SLV)

Construction started on the existing building on the subject site in 1959, with the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance building opening in 1963 (MBAI 33728; Sievers 1963, SLV). Gold lettering on both the Elizabeth and Collins street facades of the building promoted the company's name. Stephenson & Turner were the architects for the building, which was constructed by Lewis Construction Co Pty Ltd (*Cross-Section* 1963:np).

The *Cross-Section* architecture journal described the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance building in December 1963:

> *[The building] is conservatively clad, in panels of cream travertine Italian marble, grey Harcourt (Vic.) granite and black Imperial (S.A.) granite. The C.M.L. building sits back 20 ft from the Elizabeth Street frontage, providing the currently conventional street-side pedestrian precinct...The pavement space outside the C.M.L. is yet to be enlivened by a Tom Bass sculpture…On the skyline, the C.M.L. building fits into place without looking like a raw and independent intrusion…C.M.L. cost approx. £3 million. Construction: rigid steel frame. 21 floors above ground, 3 basements. Air conditioned* (*Cross-Section* 1963:np).

The building was set back, which allowed for a 'pedestrian precinct' and the installation of a Tom Bass sculpture in the forecourt of the building facing Elizabeth Street (National Trust 2014) (see Figure 2 and Figure 3). The Bass sculpture in the forecourt, installed by 18 December 1963, is known as 'Children's Tree' and was commissioned by the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society as part of the site design (*Canberra Times* 18 December 1963:35). Tom Bass later evaluated the work as follows.

Another really important part of my work has been children's sculpture…The next thing that came along was the Children's Tree in Melbourne. I had been asked by an insurance company to do a sculpture for a space that had been created in the forecourt of their new building, right in the heart of the city…When they first said they wanted a children's sculpture there, I thought how inappropriate it was to have something for children in such a busy, noisy place. But…the more I worked on it the more realised how important it was to create this little incident in the heart of a great bustling city that would remind people of their childhood. It would also be where children brought into the city could find

some little thing that related to them. So, again, I was really drawn into it and had a thoroughly marvellous experience doing it (Bass *and Smart 2006:108-109).*

The building was refurbished in 2003, and this is presumably when substantial alterations to the façade were made (CoMMaps).

Figure 2. The subject building not long after completion. (Source: Sievers 1963, SLV copyright)

Figure 3. A view of the statue and building behind it. (Source: Sievers 1963, SLV copyright)

Tom Bass, sculptor

Tom Bass was a prolific Australian sculptor, who completed many public and private commissions, including the 'Trial of Socrates' at Wilson Hall at the University of Melbourne and another children's sculpture 'Genii' in Queen Victoria Gardens. Bass' community-focused work is featured in many prominent Australian public spaces and institutions, including schools, universities and churches, as well as government and corporate sites. In 1974, Bass established the Tom Bass Sculpture Studio School (still in operation), where he taught until his death in 2010. He was made a Member of the Order of Australia for his contribution to public art. A retrospective of Bass' work was held at the Sydney Opera House, where it was claimed that 'no artist has done more to shape the face of public art in Australia' (Brown 2010; Design and Art Australia 2011).

Stephenson & Turner, architects

The *Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture* contains the following information about Stephenson & Turner:

> *At its peak, Stephenson & Turner was Australia's largest architecture firm, with offices in Melbourne, Sydney, Newcastle, New Zealand and Hong Kong. It was formed in 1921 by A. G. Stephenson and Percy Meldrum as Stephenson & Meldrum, after both had returned to Australia after WWI, having met at London's Architectural Association. The firm had relatively modest beginnings, with a range of projects and clients, including the State*

Savings Bank of Victoria (Its chairman, Sir William McBeath, had encouraged Stephenson to return to Melbourne to set up a practice.) The firm's first hospital client, the Melbourne Children's Hospital in 1925, and a proposed reform to the hospital system, prompted Stephenson to imagine a new direction for his fledgling firm and he audaciously borrowed money to take an extensive overseas trip in 1926-27 to the United States and Canada to gather intelligence and experience with a view to becoming a firm specialising in hospitals…

The firm established a Sydney office in 1934 led by Donald Keith Turner, and were known in NSW from 1935 as Stephenson, Meldrum & Turner, taking on several large hospital projects including Gloucester House at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Sydney (1936) ... Meldrum was becoming increasingly uncomfortable with Stephenson's interest in taking on more hospital work…The result was a very rapid and acrimonious split in the partnership…

Turner & Stephenson continued as Stephenson & Turner, continuing their hospital work during WWII, and afterwards promoted a number of their associates, such as Ellison Harvie, Geoffrey Moline and John D. Fisher, to partners. Beyond their hospital work, the firm also undertook key industrial complexes, commercial office buildings, banks, town plans (including Shepparton (1946) and the Australian pavilions at the Paris Exposition (1937) and the New York World's Fair (1939-40) (Willis 2012).

SITE DESCRIPTION

308-336 Collins Street, Melbourne is a 19-storey concrete and steel building built 1959-63 in the Post-War Modernist style. It exhibits key characteristics of the style, particularly the use of a steel and reinforced-concrete frame allowing for its great height at the time, distinct double height base in a contrasting material and set back shopfronts to create an undercroft. Positioned on the north-west corner of Collins Street and Elizabeth Street, the building is set back from Elizabeth Street to create a small publicly accessible plaza. The building has a narrow frontage to Elizabeth Street, but is on a deep block that extends a considerable distance along Collins Street.

Above the ground level the primary façade facing Collins Street is divided into sixteen equal vertical bays providing a regular grid of windows. Four more identical vertical bays complete the eastern elevation facing Elizabeth Street reinforcing the cubiform massing of the building. The windows are framed in natural aluminium with a central mullion. It is unclear if these are original or have been replaced, but the original pattern of two vertically proportioned sashes for each module is retained.

The building was refurbished in 2003 which included the re-cladding of the facade in an aluminium cladding system, replacing the original panels of cream travertine Italian marble and grey Harcourt granite. This has resulted in the building losing some of the original design refinement of the structural grid, especially the prominence of the projecting vertical elements. Notwithstanding this the original character of the building resulting from its cubiform massing, structural grid and regular pattern of windows remains clearly legible.

At the ground and first floor level the original form of the building remains largely unaltered.-A simple rectangular pattern etched into the granite is evident in the spandrel above the shop fronts along both Collins and Elizabeth streets, which is original. The windows at the first-floor level are natural aluminium framed and appear original. At the ground level the shop fronts were originally set back from the street to provide an undercroft as the building had no awning at street level. The shop fronts have been replaced and brought forward to be in line with the building's façade above. A continuous

awning has been added to the Collins Street façade. Along Elizabeth Street a smaller cantilevered awning has been added and provides some shelter to the plaza space.

The Tom Bass sculpture known as 'Children's Tree' was commissioned by the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society in 1963 specifically for the plaza of the building at 308-336 Collins Street. It remains in its original setting, located close to the two pedestrian crossings at the intersection of Collins and Elizabeth streets. The bronze sculpture displays two children around a small, leafy tree: a girl holds a doll and a boy kneels to have a closer look at a lizard at the base of the tree. On top of the tree is an owl overlooking passersby.

INTEGRITY

308-336 Collins Street is generally intact with some changes visible to original or early fabric. Alterations include the recladding of the building above street level with an aluminium cladding system and the replacement of shopfronts, bringing them forward to be in line with the building above. At the ground and first floor level the original form of the building remains with its original granite cladding and what appear to be original aluminium framed windows. The plaza has been retained, although its extension into the building's undercroft has been lost. The Tom Bass sculpture 'Children's Tree' remains in its original location within the forecourt.

The building's original built form, scale, some evidence of its original materials and key stylistic details remain clearly legible.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Building and plaza 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 building 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 the Former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Building. 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).

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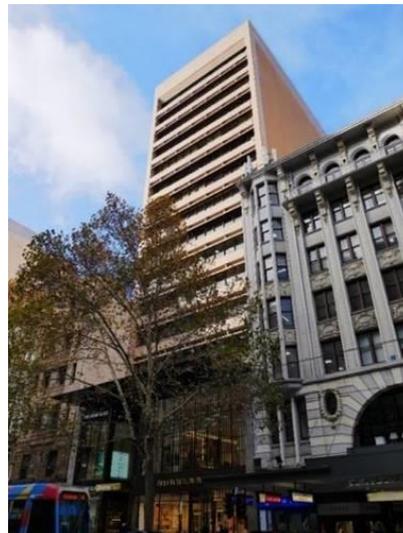
Former Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building, 251-257 Collins Street, (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 19741-73 included in HO502 The Block Precinct (fronting Collins Street) & HO506 (fronting Flinders Lane) (Non-contributory).

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)

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

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)

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

CONTEXT

Royal Mail House, 255-267 Bourke Street (D Graeme Lumsden, 1963)

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)

CONTEXT

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)

Royal Insurance Group Building, 430-442 Collins Street (Yunken Freeman, 1966)

Public artworks

Within the Hoddle Grid, the following public artworks are comparable to the Tom Bass 1963 'Children's Tree' sculpture, in terms of the medium, setting or time period:

Hosies Hotel Mural, 1-5 Elizabeth Street, 1955 (VHR H2094; HO938 – mural only)

Hosie's Hotel Mural, at the corner of Elizabeth and Flinders streets, was created in 1955. Richard Beck (1912-1985), an English and German trained graphic designer and one of the leading modernist graphic designers in Melbourne at the time, was commissioned to create a mural for the new Hosie's Hotel. The Hosie's Hotel Mural is of historic importance for its connection to the modernist movement in architecture and design in Melbourne. At this time, modernism was important as the city of Melbourne attempted to present itself to the world as a modern, contemporary city at the time of the 1956 Olympic Games. The re-building of Hosie's Hotel was an expression of a desire to provide modern hotel accommodation and the inclusion of the mural in the overall design of the building demonstrates the desire to appear modern.

CONTEXT

Hosies Hotel Mural, built in 1955.

Former Sleigh Corner Building with 'Transformation', 158-164 Queen Street, 1964 (Recommended as individually significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review)

The former Sleigh Corner Building (now known as Elders House), at 158-164 Queen Street, is a 15-storey postwar pre-cast concrete and steel curtain wall corner commercial office building. It was constructed in 1964 to a design by Bates Smart & McCutcheon for H C Sleigh Ltd. It is a fine example of the postwar International style. It has a narrow frontage to Queen Street and deeper frontage to Bourke Street. The building retains its original plaza with sculpture 'Transformation' created by sculptor Tom Bass.

158-164 Queen Street and 'Transformation', built in 1964. (Source: Context 2019)

St James, 527-555 Bourke Street with 'Awakening', 1969

A site with two building properties. Designed in the International style by the New York company Skidmore Owings & Merrill LLP in partnership with Bates Smart & McCutcheon and built in 1969. The sculpture 'Awakening' by the internationally renowned sculptor, Clement Meadmore, partially encloses the space to the east, complementing the architecture and providing a human scale.

CONTEXT
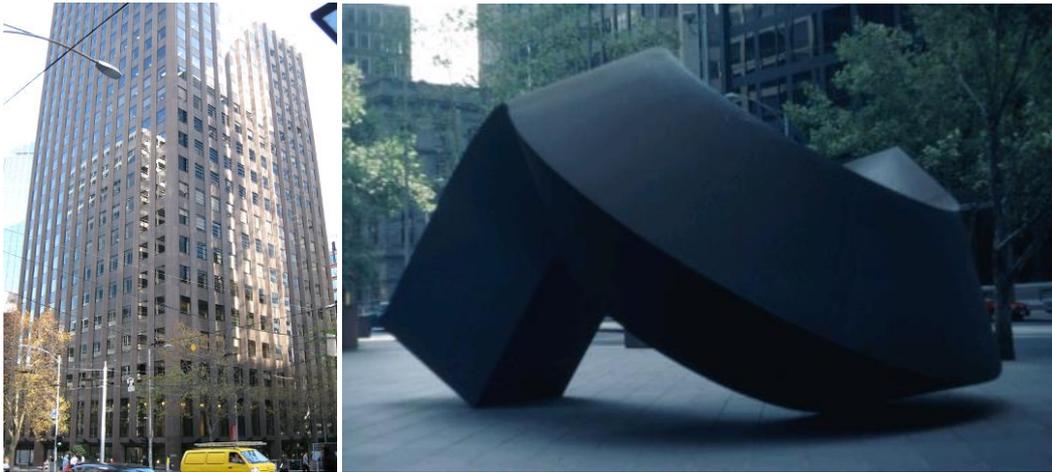
Tower at 535 Bourke Street and 'Awakening' by Clement Meadmore, built in 1969.

Former Shell House, 1 Spring Street, 1985-89 (VHR H2356; HO1235)

1 Spring Street, Melbourne comprises a 28-storey office tower and northern podium, main foyer with Arthur Boyd mural 'Bathers and Pulpit Rock', and external plazas including a large external plaza at the Spring Street corner containing the Charles O Perry sculpture 'Shell Mace'. The building was originally known as Shell House (VHD Place ID 197961; CoMMaps).

1 Spring Street and 'Shell Mace' by Charles O Perry, built in 1985-89.

Analysis

The former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Building and plaza compares with the above examples of Post-War Modernist style office buildings built from the 1960s to the mid 1970s. The subject building is a generally intact example of the type, demonstrating the key characteristics such as the use of steel and reinforced concrete frame and non-loadbearing glazed façade system. Eagle House at 473 Bourke Street (VHR H1806), Reserve Bank of Australia at 60 Collins Street (Contributory in HO504 Collins East Precinct) generally compare with the subject building, sharing similar design aspects of the postwar period.

The former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Building and plaza is an important, and increasingly rare, example within the Hoddle Grid of a postwar office site on a major corner location, where the original

CONTEXT

configuration of the publicly accessible open plaza has been retained. Most other examples in Melbourne that retain their original plaza setting are located outside of the Hoddle Grid, such as the Victorian State Offices at 1 Macarthur Street and 1 Treasury Place (VHR H1526), which also has a forecourt plaza with the building set back from the street. The subject site is distinguished by its siting on a prestigious corner location with an intact open plaza.

The site is also notable among its contemporaries for the sculpture 'Children's Tree', created by important sculptor Tom Bass, in the plaza. As an artwork exposed to general public within the busy central Melbourne area, it is comparable to the Hosie's Hotel Mural, in that both were created during the postwar era. As a three-dimensional sculpture included in the design for an overall building scheme, St James with 'Awakening' at 527-555 Bourke Street and the former Sleigh Corner Building with 'Transformation' at 158-164 Queen Street (both recommended as individually significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review) are comparable to the subject site.

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).

CONTEXT

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 43.01-3)	No
TO BE INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

OTHER

N/A

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PREVIOUS STUDIES

Central Activities District Conservation Study 1985	C
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: Former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society Building with Plaza and 'Children's Tree' sculpture	**PS ref no:** HOXXXX
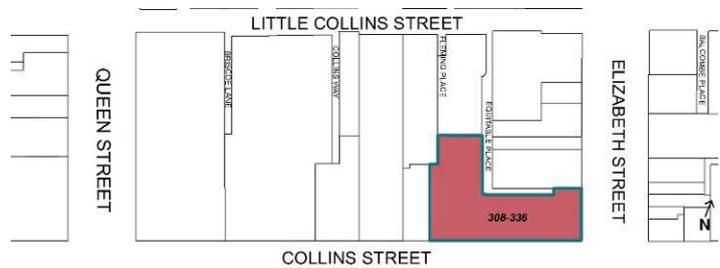
What is significant?

The former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society building, built in 1959-63 to a design by Stephenson & Turner, and publicly accessible plaza with bronze 'Children's Tree' sculpture, created in 1963 by Tom Bass at 308-336 Collins Street, Melbourne, is significant.

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

- Original building form and scale;
- Original publicly accessible plaza setting with bronze 'Children's Tree' sculpture, created in 1963 by Tom Bass;
- Original pattern of fenestrations; and
- Original double height building base with granite cladding and aluminium windows.

Later alterations, particularly at street level, are not significant.

How it is significant?

The former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society Building with Plaza and 'Children's Tree' sculpture at 308-336 Collins Street is of local historic, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

The former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society building, constructed in 1959-63 to a design by Stephenson & Turner, for the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society (founded in Melbourne in 1873), is significant as part of the post-World War Two development and the rapid growth of the corporate architecture of the 1950s-1970s. Its development reflected the expansion of large national and international companies opting for construction and naming rights of new city office buildings as a form of promotion and fund investment. The former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance building is significant historically as a reflection of the growth of insurance and assurance companies in Victoria during the 1950s-60s resulting in many company-named buildings being commissioned and constructed. (Criterion A)

The former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society building and plaza is also historically significant as an example of a postwar office site that provided a publicly accessible plaza, demonstrating one of the key aspects of the postwar corporate buildings in Melbourne. Many postwar office towers also played a gallery role as sculpture, paintings and tapestries were installed in their foyers, meeting rooms and forecourts. The provision of the forecourt or plaza in the curtilages of building allotments created a specific urban form in the central city. The former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society building and plaza is an important example that still retains the ground level plaza and commissioned artwork by sculptor Tom Bass, 'Children's Tree'. (Criteria A and D)

The former Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society building is a good example of post war development in central Melbourne that retains its original form, scale and characteristic stylistic details which reflect the era and original design in which it was constructed. It exhibits a design aesthetic characteristic of its type, medium/high rise commercial office buildings that combine expansive glazed panel with solid sections to achieve a distinctive expressed aesthetic. Key stylistic details include the regular grid pattern of windows above ground level and the original double height building base, clad in granite and retaining the original aluminium framed windows. It is unusual in retaining its original plaza and bronze sculpture 'Children's Tree' created in 1963 by Tom Bass specifically for this space. (Criterion D)

The bronze sculpture 'Children's Tree', created in 1963 by celebrated Australian sculptor Tom Bass, and set within its original plaza setting is aesthetically significant. The aesthetic qualities of the place are enhanced by the incorporation of an outstanding piece of publicly accessible artwork in the plaza, which was commissioned by the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society. The sculpture and plaza were integral parts of the original design of the building at 308-336 Collins Street, by architects Stephenson & Turner. (Criterion E)

Primary source

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

CONTEXT