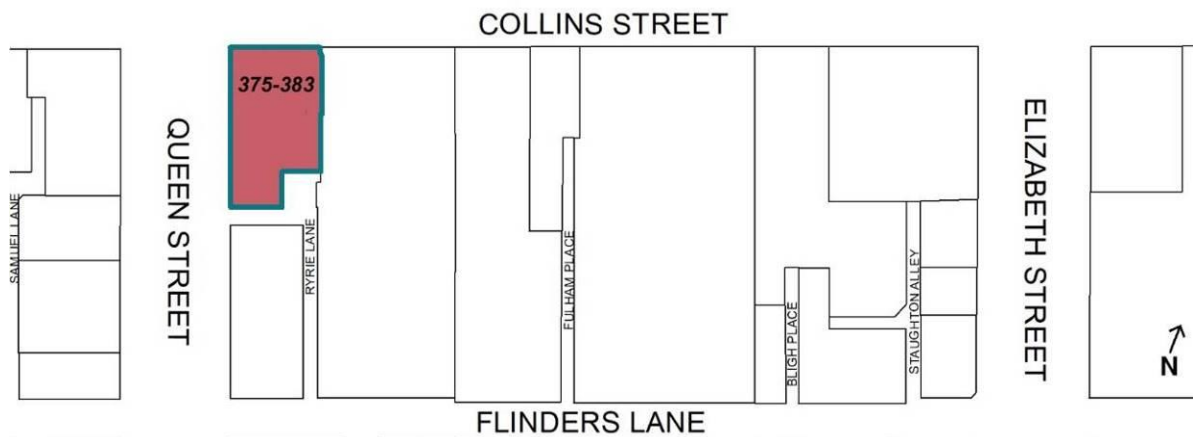


SITE NAME	Former Legal & General House
STREET ADDRESS	375-383 Collins Street, Melbourne
PROPERTY ID	102093



SURVEY DATE: March 2019

SURVEY BY: Context

HERITAGE
INVENTORY

N/A

EXISTING HERITAGE
OVERLAY

No

PLACE TYPE

Individual Heritage Place

PROPOSED
CATEGORY

Significant

FORMER GRADE

Ungraded

DESIGNER /
ARCHITECT / ARTIST:Bernard Evans, Murphy,
Berg & Hocking

BUILDER:

E A Watts Pty Ltd

DEVELOPMENT
PERIOD:Postwar Period (1945-
1975)DATE OF CREATION /
MAJOR
CONSTRUCTION:

1967

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	Office
1920s	Office
1960s	Office

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 Legal & General House at 375-383 Collins Street, Melbourne, is a 17-storey postwar office building built in 1967 to a design by architects Bernard Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking in the Post-War Modernist style. The building opened in 1967 for Legal & General Assurance Society Limited and was occupied by that company until 1993. *It continues to be used as offices today.*

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.

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 subject site of 375-383 Collins Street forms part of Crown Allotment 18, Block 4, first purchased by Arthur Willis for J McIntyre for £42 in 1837 ('Plan of Melbourne' 1838; DCLS 1839). By the late nineteenth century Block 4 was developed with mostly masonry buildings of three to five storeys.

Commercial businesses, predominantly in the fields of banking and insurance, populated Block 4 and continued to make up the dominant industry in that block into the twentieth century (Mahlstedt Map no 4, 1888). In 1887 a building permit was registered for the subject site for the construction of an eight-storey building for merchant F W Prell. David Mitchell oversaw the construction of the substantial building to the design of architect Francis Maloney White (MCC registration no 3102, as cited in AAI, record no 71566; Broome et al 2016:2). The building, occupied by several commercial agencies, including North British & Mercantile Insurance, was one of three highly ornate buildings known as Prell's Buildings, all built on prominent corner sites with Queen Street frontages, constructed by Mitchell and designed by White (see Figure 1) (Broome et al 2016). At the time of their construction, Prell's Buildings were amongst Melbourne's tallest (*Bendigo Advertiser* 15 June 1888:3; Mahlstedt Map section 1 no 15, 1910). In 1929 the building on the subject site was extensively remodelled for the Australian Provincial Assurance Association (APA) (*Argus* 14 September 1929:6). As part of the remodelling, the APA erected a tower atop the building that was described, following its completion,

as a new landmark on the site of Prell's Building (see Figure 2) (*Argus* 28 June 1930:6). The building became known as the Australian Provincial Assurance (APA) Building during this time. APA occupied the ground floor of the building and leased the above ground storeys to commercial tenants, many of whom were insurance or banking organisations (S&Mc 1940).

Prior to construction of the subject building, English company Legal & General Assurance Society Limited acquired the 1887 building in 1954 to commence operations in Australia (CT:V6002 F251). In 1955, the Legal & General Assurance Society Limited and APA occupied the ground floor of the 1887 building (S&Mc 1955). The following year Legal & General Assurance established its first Australian branch at 375-383 Collins Street, which opened in 1956, and the building became known as the Legal & General Building (*Age* 6 August 1955:27; *Sydney Morning Herald* 31 December 1955:25; S&Mc 1960). Legal & General retained ownership of the subject site until 1993 (CT:V6002 F51).

Legal & General Assurance Society Limited was formed in London in 1836 as the New Law Life Assurance Society, restricted to those in the legal profession. The name was changed to Legal & General Life Assurance Society in the 1920s when policies were made available to the general public. The society expanded in the United Kingdom and acquired a number of overseas life assurance companies, and by 1956, Legal & General Assurance reputedly had the largest ordinary insurance branch business in the United Kingdom. By the 1960s, the company's assets were valued at £1 billion (Legal & General Group 2019; *Age* 4 February 1956:5).

Legal & General Assurance Society Ltd announced the establishment of its first life assurance branch in Australia, in Melbourne, in 1956 (*Age* 4 February 1956:5). The company's subsidiary, the Gresham Fire & Accident Society, had operated in Australia from 1912.

Legal & General Assurance's business invested several million pounds in Australia and grew exponentially in the late 1950s. Between 1946 and 1958, the Society's assets increased from £100 million to £400 million (*Age* 14 January 1959:6). The Society was formally admitted to the Life Offices' Assurance Society for Australasia in 1966 (*Age* 21 December 1966:11).

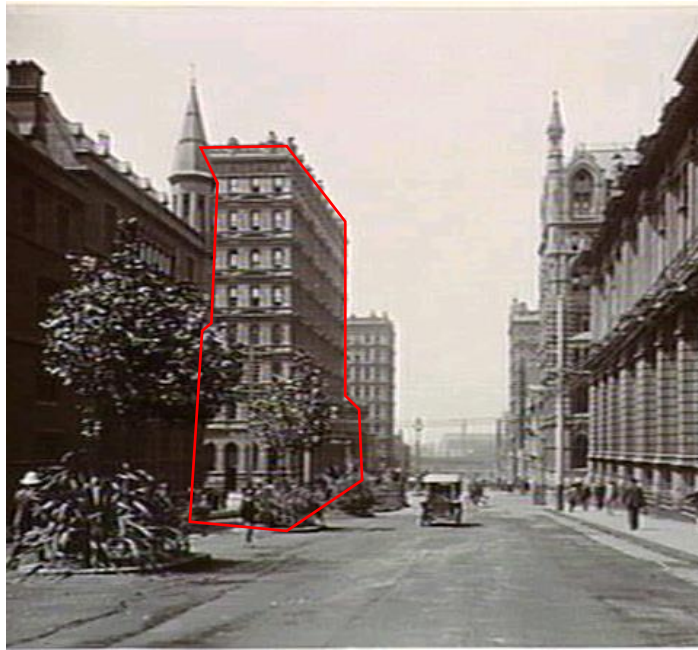


Figure 1. Queen Street looking south showing Prell's Buildings, c1913-1914. The Prell's building that was formerly located on the subject site is outlined in red. (Source: SLV)



Figure 2. Prell's Building on the subject site during remodelling in 1929. (Source: *Argus* 14 September 1929:6)

In 1965 Legal & General Assurance filed a building application for the erection of a new building valued at £1,300,000 on the subject site (MBAI). In 1966-67 E A Watts constructed the 17-storey building, named Legal & General House, to a design by architects Bernard Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hockey (see Figure 3) (CoMMaps). During its construction, an article in the *Age* described the building as contributing to Melbourne's changing skyline, because of its height and the coppery glow of its façade, designed for sun and glare protection. The building's heat-reflecting glass cladding, an innovation at the time, incorporated a transparent gold coating capable of resisting and reflecting infrared sun waves (*Age* 25 October 1966:13). The newspaper article noted that the new building would feature a paved and landscaped forecourt set 20 feet back from Collins Street, and be faced

with white mosaic tiles articulated with black mosaic tile recess



(see

Figure 4) (*Age* 25 October 1966:13).

In 1967, space in Legal & General House was advertised for lease. Each level was air-conditioned and comprised 6315 square feet of space on each floor (*Age* 28 June 1967:11). By 1970, the majority of the floors had been filled by multiple commercial enterprises, many belonging to insurance and brokering agencies. Legal & General Assurance Society Ltd occupied the ground floor and Capel Courts Securities Ltd occupied several other floors within the building in 1974 (S&Mc 1970, 1974). Internal partitions were added and removed within the building from the 1960s through to the 1980s (MBAI).

In 1984 the entrance and lobby were refurbished, and a canopy erected to cover exposed decorative beams within the courtyard (MBAI). The ground-level façade was faced with marble cladding the following year, concurrent with alterations to the ground and seventh floors (MBAI).

The Legal & General Assurance Society Ltd became a wholly owned division of the Legal & General Group in the 1970s. In 1991, the company decided to abandon the Melbourne property market and concentrate on its portfolio in Sydney, Brisbane and possibly Canberra (*Age* 23 October 1991:24). In October 1991, the Legal & General Group announced that it planned to sell Legal & General House, its last remaining Melbourne building, for between \$15 and \$20 million (*Age* 23 October 1991:24). Director of Legal & General noted that the building was offered at a 'realistic price' because it required extensive refurbishment (*Age* 23 October 1991:24). With its headquarters in London, Legal & General continues to operate today, offering investment management, lifetime mortgages, pensions, annuities, life assurance, and general insurance (Legal & General Group 2019).

The subject building was sold in 1993 to Perpetual Nominees Ltd, which subsequently carried out a series of refurbishment works to the building with the bulk of work taking place in 1998. It is likely that components of the 1998 refurbishment involved the clear green tinted glazing clad to the ground level and an open balcony with glass balustrade, metal railing (CT:6002 F251; CoMMaps).

Offices in the building continued to be occupied by the legal and financial professions through the 1990s-2000s (*Age* 15 May 1995:25; 23 December 2000:80).

The building presently houses offices occupied by 36 businesses (CoMMaps).

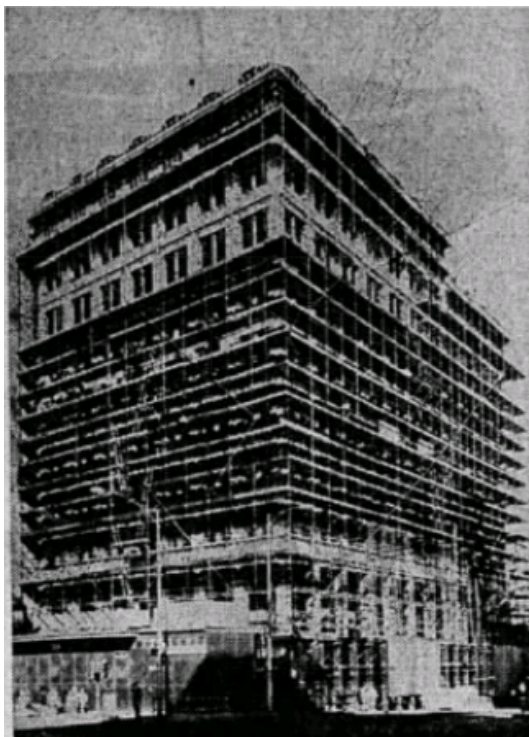


Figure 3. New Legal & General House under construction, 1966. (Source: *Age* 25 October 1966:13)



Figure 4. Photograph showing Legal & General House completed. (Source: Crothers 1967, SLV)

Bernard Evans (Bernard Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking), architect

Bernard Evans (1905-1981) was an architect, builder and civic leader. Born in Manchester, his family emigrated in 1913 and Bernard worked for his father as a designer and builder, studied at the Working Man's College (now RMIT University) and established the Premier Building Company in 1928. His expansive career spanned a period as Melbourne City Councillor (1949-73) and Lord Mayor (1959, 1960). Evans was known for his work on flats and public housing. His work in the 1950s and 60s was concerned with office buildings and the Emerald Hill Court Estate in South Melbourne. His impressive Ampol House (1958) with the spiral staircase, at the corner of Grattan Street and Elizabeth Street, was demolished in 2012 (Dunstan 2012:237-8).

Evans campaigned for the removal of the 40-metre (132-foot) height limit for buildings in the city centre. His architectural firm of Bernard Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking Pty Ltd was disbanded in 1975 following Evans' resignation in 1971. A larger than life figure, he was knighted in 1962 but faced allegations of conflict of interest with his private companies and his role as a Councillor for the City of Melbourne (Dunstan 2012:237-8).

SITE DESCRIPTION

The former Legal & General House at 375-383 Collins Street, Melbourne, is a 17-storey reinforced concrete frame commercial building, originally constructed in 1967 and refurbished at ground level in

1998. The building exhibits characteristics of the Post-War Modernist style, evident in its strong modular format reflective glass cladding. Located on a prominent corner with frontages to both Queen Street and Collins Street, the building has an 'L-shape' footprint and also has a rear frontage to Ryrie Lane.

The ground level main entry to the building is on the Queen Street frontage, enclosed by a projecting steel and glass 'loggia' that occupies the original set back space to the Queen Street boundary. At the top of the building there is a thin 'floating' roof slab supported by columns aligned with the main structural grid.

The Legal & General House was notable for being '...faced with white mosaic tiles articulated with black mosaic tile recess(es)', the glass used in its windows that featured '...transparent gold coating capable of resisting and reflecting infra-red sun waves' and other aspects of its design and planning including the '... paved and landscaped forecourt set 20 feet back from Collins Street'. The mosaic tiling and tinted glazing remain extant. Between the bottom and top levels, the façade exhibits a robust grid pattern created with three-dimensional square panels clad in white mosaic tiles, contrasted with a recessed black mosaic tiled surfaces. Each module of white mosaic-tiled square precast concrete frame surrounds a copper mosaic-tiled internal panel surrounding paired windows with gold-tinted glazing.

The overall strong modularity of the facades of the building also continued down to the ground plane as rectangular columns, so that the facade at street level was dominated by the double height colonnade (see figure 4). While still extant, the ground floor colonnade is now partially overlaid by the recent glass cladding.

In what is understood to be major components of its 1998 refurbishment, the ground level to the Queen Street and Collins Street frontages are clad in clear green tinted frameless glazing fixed to the reinforced concrete structure, and with thin horizontal aluminium spandrels. On the south-western corner is a small, open balcony with glass balustrade, metal railing and compact canopy overhead supported by two squat, rectangular concrete columns.

INTEGRITY

The former Legal & General House at 375-383 Collins Street is highly intact with few changes visible to original fabric. Above the ground and first floor levels, the building retains its original modular pattern of fenestration, original stylistic details, and with original materials to wall surfaces and glazing. The thin 'floating' roof slab supported by columns is also retained. The distinctive ground floor colonnade has been partially obscured by clear and green tinted frameless glazing with thin horizontal aluminium spandrels, reducing the visual impact of the double height colonnade, although at street level on the southern and eastern elevations the original rectangular concrete columns are extant. The original setback from Queen Street, a notable feature of the original building design, has also been partially enclosed by a projecting steel and glass 'loggia'. The building also retains its original built form and scale, configuration, and materiality. Overall the building has high integrity.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The 1950s saw the development of the modern multi-story office building in Melbourne, often built for insurance companies or finance companies, or for professional offices. From this time through to the mid 1970s, the Post-War Modernist style enjoyed widespread popularity, particularly for high-rise

commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne. Reinforced concrete frames provided the structural systems, allowing the façade to be clad in a non-load bearing curtain wall. In early examples, curtain walls were typically fully glazed, while in later examples, precast concrete was used to achieve variety of expression and flexibility of form, led by Bates Smart McCutcheon's South British Building of 1960-62.

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 Royal Insurance Group 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).

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)



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



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)



Royal Insurance Group Building, 430-442 Collins Street (Yuncken Freeman, 196)



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)



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

In its early use of a non-loadbearing precast concrete panel façade system, the former Legal & General House at 375-383 Collins Street is comparable to a number of other buildings in central Melbourne constructed at a similar time. It is particularly comparable with the Royal Insurance Group Building at 430-442 Collins Street (interim HO1010) and the Scottish Amicable Building at 128-146 Queen Street (HO1213). It shares with these examples characteristics consistent with the Post-War Modernist style, including concrete post and slab construction, a non-loadbearing precast concrete panel façade with a repetitive modular geometry and a double or triple height street level undercroft and colonnade (altered for the subject building). The façade panels of the former Legal & General House have a more pronounced appearance than the abovementioned examples, although on close inspection reveal fine detailing in the mosaic-tiled wall surfaces.

The former Legal & General House is also comparable with other above buildings as an early example of a high-rise commercial building constructed following the abolition of the 40-metre height limit for buildings in the city centre.

The buildings above almost all share a history of construction for large insurance, assurance or banking organisations, and reflect the increased economic activity of the 1950s-70s in Melbourne that facilitated the construction of new bank buildings and the headquarters of national companies and corporations, including insurance companies. In Melbourne this activity was concentrated in the traditional centre of commerce and finance, west of Elizabeth Street in Queen and Collins streets, established from the late nineteenth century. The comparative examples including the subject building reflect this pattern of activity.

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 43.01-3)	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	Ungraded
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Central City Heritage Review 1993	Ungraded
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Review of Heritage overlay listings in the CBD 2002	Ungraded
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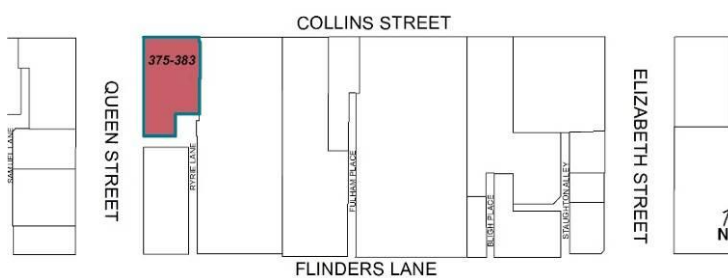
Central City Heritage Review 2011	Ungraded
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Former Legal & General House



PS ref no: HOXXXX



What is significant?

The former Legal & General House at 375-383 Collins Street, Melbourne, built 1967, is significant.

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

- Original form and scale;
- Original modular composition of façades comprising precast concrete panels with inset windows;
- Original external materials including mosaic tiles, glazing, remaining fabric of the original colonnade; and,
- 'Floating' roof slab supported by columns.

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

How it is significant?

The former Legal & General House at 375-383 Collins Street is of historic, representative, aesthetic and technical significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

The former Legal & General House is historically significant for the evidence it provides of Melbourne's postwar development and rapid growth of corporate architecture. Constructed in 1967 to a design by architects Bernard Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking, the building demonstrates the pattern in 1950s-70s' Melbourne of increased economic activity that facilitated the construction of new bank buildings and headquarters of national and international companies and corporations. Many of these companies were banking, insurance and assurance related. In Melbourne this activity was concentrated west of Elizabeth

Street in Queen and Collins streets from the late nineteenth century. Legal & General House is located within this precinct, occupying the site of the earlier 1887 Prell's Buildings. The Prell's Buildings were occupied by commercial agencies including North British & Mercantile Insurance, and the Australian Provincial Assurance Association and were owned by Legal & General Assurance Society from 1954. (Criterion A)

The former Legal & General House is significant as a highly intact example of a Post-War Modernist style commercial building in central Melbourne. The building exhibits key characteristics of the style, including concrete post and slab construction, a non-loadbearing precast concrete panel façade with a repetitive modular geometry, and a double height street level undercroft and colonnade. Although the undercroft and colonnade have been altered in part, and are partially obscured, original fabric remains which enables the original building form and style at ground level to be appreciated. The former Legal & General House is also representative of the early wave of high-rise commercial buildings constructed following the abolition of the 40-metre (132-foot) height limit for buildings in the city centre. (Criterion D)

The former Legal & General House is significant for the retention of fine original detailing, including original mosaic-tiled wall surfaces, and copper tinted glazing which was noted at the time of its completion as creating a coppery glow to the façade. The glazing was also noted at the time as innovative, designed for sun and glare protection. The building's height and the aesthetic effect of the glazing were key factors contributing to the building's distinctive aesthetic prominence in Melbourne's changing skyline. (Criteria E and F)

Primary source

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

