SITE NAME	Lonsdale Exchange Building
STREET ADDRESS	447-453 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne
PROPERTY ID	105710
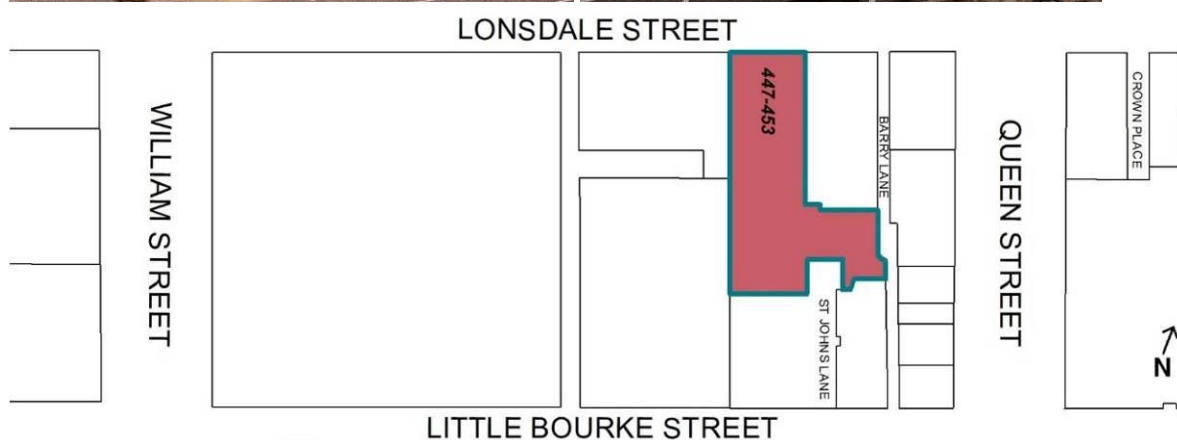
SURVEY DATE: March 2019		SURVEY BY: Context	
HERITAGE INVENTORY	N/A	**EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY**	No
PLACE TYPE	Individual Heritage Place	**PROPOSED CATEGORY**	Significant
		FORMER GRADE	Ungraded
DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:	Commonwealth Department of Works	**BUILDER:**	P D C Construction Pty Limited
DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:	Postwar Period (1945-1975)	**DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:**	1969

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
	1.10 Brutalism and brickwork
2 Governing, administering and policing the city	2.1 Commonwealth government

LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	Residential, Warehouses
1920s	Telegraphic and telephonic
1960s	Telegraphic and telephonic

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 Lonsdale Exchange Building at 447-453 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne was built in 1969 by PDC Construction to a design by the Commonwealth Department of Works. The 15-storey building built in the Post-War Modernist and Brutalist styles replaced an earlier telephone exchange on the site, the Central Telephone Exchange built in 1911 which, by the postwar period could no longer deliver the required services. Ownership of the building was transferred in 1986 to Telecom, which continues to occupy the building today as the Telstra Corporation.

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).

CONTEXT

Brutalism and brickwork

Brutalism was another architectural style that emerged in commercial building design in Australia as early as 1959, when Harry Seidler used off-form concrete for an eight-storey office block in Ultimo, NSW. That same year, Melbourne architect Kevin Knight (from the office of Oakley & Parkes) prepared plans for the International Order of Oddfellows (IOOF) Building at 380 Russell Street, Melbourne that broke new ground with its banded façade of reinforced concrete spandrels.

Based on the work of modern architecture pioneer Le Corbusier, and largely inspired by his design for the *Unité d'Habitation* in Marseilles (1952), this architectural style became widely accepted internationally. Brutalism incorporated ideas of integrity in expression of materials (especially off-form concrete), structure and function, and often gave rise to dramatic sculptural forms (VHD Hoyts Cinema Centre).

Brutalism became more widespread in central Melbourne in the 1970s. The Mid City Centre at 194-200 Bourke Street (Bogle & Banfield, 1969-70), is a notable example, with its façade of chamfered concrete volumes.

During the 1960s and 70s, face brickwork also made a return with the Houston Building at 184-192 Queen Street (E & G Kolle & Associates, 1964-65), the State Savings Bank of Victoria, 233-243 Queen Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes Mewton & Lobb, 1967-68) and the 13-storey Nubrik House at 269-275 William Street by architects Buchan, Laird & Buchan (1972) (NTAV 2014:22).

Commonwealth government

In 1948, the Commonwealth Government compulsorily acquired land on either side of Little Lonsdale Street, between Spring and Exhibition streets. The Commonwealth Centre (now demolished) was subsequently constructed on this block of land (with a street address of 11-39 La Trobe Street) over the period 1958 to the early 1960s. Its construction transformed 'the image of the Federal government in central Melbourne into that of a modern corporation' (Lewis et al 1993:223-24, 255).

As Commonwealth powers increased after World War II, Commonwealth buildings in city centres rose in number. Of particular influence was the transfer in 1942 of income tax revenue from the states to the Commonwealth and the resultant construction of buildings for the Taxation Office, including a building in Bourke Street, which opened in 1958. Marsden writes that the Commonwealth government presence, including the establishment after the war of the new Department of Housing and Construction, reinforced Melbourne's continuing pre-eminence as Australia's financial centre, at least until the 1960s.

A telephone exchange and postal hall building was constructed by the Commonwealth government at 114-120 Russell Street in the period 1948-54. In 1956 the building served as a relay station for the broadcasting of newly arrived television. In 1959, the Commonwealth Arbitration Courts opened at 450 Little Bourke Street, and in 1965 the Reserve Bank of Australia opened at 56-64 Collins Street. Telephone exchanges were also constructed by the Commonwealth Department of Works at 376-382 Flinders Lane (opened in 1957) and at 447-453 Lonsdale Street (1969).

SITE HISTORY

The subject site at 447-453 Lonsdale Street is an irregular sized allotment that forms part of Crown Allotment 12, and some of Crown Allotments 10 and 11, Block 19 ('Plan of Melbourne' 1838). The bulk of the built form, that which has a north-south alignment and frontage to Lonsdale Street, is sited

on Crown Allotment 12, first purchased by Henry Elmes for £185 in 1837 ('Plan of Melbourne' 1838; DCLS 1839). A small rectangular module of the building projects in an east-west alignment off the main built form, partially covering Crown Allotments 10 and 11, with a street frontage to Barry Lane. The whole of Block 19 had no buildings extant in 1852 (Laing 1852, SLV).

By 1888, there was a cluster of three two-storey residential buildings fronting Lonsdale Street on Crown Allotment 12, including a boarding house until 1910 (S&Mc 1895, 1910). Behind these residential buildings, extending back to Little Bourke Street, was an assemblage of one and two-storey utilitarian and industrial buildings. The remainder of the unbuilt land was used as iron rail yards (Mahlstedt Map no 19, 1888).

By 1910 the Victorian cluster of buildings had been demolished (S&Mc 1910). In 1911 the Commonwealth Telephone Exchange, also known as the Central Telephone Exchange, was constructed on the subject land, which was numbered 447-457 Lonsdale Street at that time (see Figure 1, Figure 2) (Butler and Associates 2011:416; S&Mc 1910, 1911).
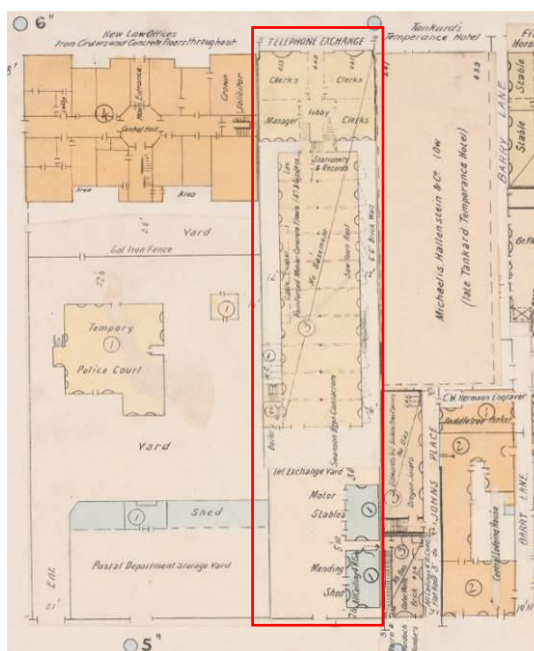

Figure 1. An extract from a plan showing the 1911 Central Telephone Exchange building outlined in red. (Source: Mahlstedt G1910 section 1 no 16)
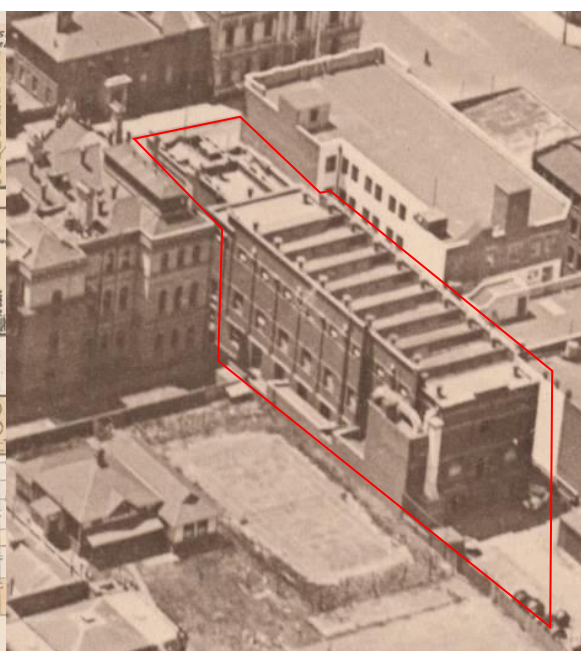
Figure 2. An extract from an aerial photograph showing the Central Telephone Exchange built in 1911, outlined in red. (Source: Airspy 1929, SLV)

The Central Telephone Exchange was a three-storey high masonry building with reinforced Monier concrete floors and a saw-tooth roof in the rear module built by Swanson Bros Contractors). It superseded the Wills Street Telephone Exchange, built in 1884, which had previously serviced the City of Melbourne (Butler and Associates 2011:416). The opening of the new telephone exchange helped to meet the growing demands for subscriptions and to alleviate dependence on the older, and by then outgrown, telephone exchange at Wills Street.

A temporary police court was also erected on the subject site in c1911 and a postal department storage yard was built to the street edge on Little Bourke Street, reflecting the strong civic function of this area of the city which encompassed government, administration and communication services (see Figure 1).

The Central Exchange manual switchboard was installed in the Lonsdale Street Central Telephone Exchange building in 1911 and serviced the whole of the City of Melbourne. Wills Street Exchange lines were transferred incrementally to Lonsdale Street and, by 1912, the new Exchange hosted 4,728-line subscriptions, with a further 3,412 lines remaining to be transferred (*Argus* 1 August 1912:10). In the mid-late 1930s, the switchboard's capacity was fully absorbed, and the City West Automatic Exchange was subsequently established in 1937 (Commonwealth of Australia 1945-46:4). The City West Exchange was built on the allotment behind the Lonsdale Street exchange, fronting Little Bourke Street (the building is still extant and presently operates as the Telstra City West building). Most of the telephone services in the city that lay west of Elizabeth Street were transferred to City West Exchange once it was constructed, while the portion of the city east of Elizabeth Street continued to be serviced by the Lonsdale Street Exchange.

In 1946, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works reported that the manual switchboard at Lonsdale Street had become badly worn and was no longer capable of rendering good service (Commonwealth of Australia 1945-46:4).

Completed in 1969, the Lonsdale Exchange, replaced the former Central Telephone Exchange that had occupied the subject site since 1910 (see Figure 3 and Figure 4). In March 1965 the Commonwealth Department of Works published a notice inviting contractors to register as tenderers for the Lonsdale Telephone Exchange (*Age* 3 March 1965:48). Comprising fourteen upper floors, a ground floor, basement and sub-basement, the Lonsdale Telephone Exchange was to be constructed in steel and concrete with face brickwork externally. It was to cover an area of 2400 square metres and required extensive underpinning of adjoining buildings as part of the process (see Figure 5) (*Sydney Morning Herald* 10 March 1965:36).

PDC Construction carried out the works for a contract to the value of $6,000,000 (*Age* 16 March 1967:17) The Lonsdale Telephone Exchange was built abutting the City West Telephone Exchange, constructed1937, which faces Little Bourke Street; the buildings were connected internally by two points (see Figure 3).

Few changes were made to the building after its construction (see Figure 6). Tenders were issued for the installation of a concrete hardstand in 1971, presumably the carpark that fronts Little Bourke Street, and a new services riser in 1990 (*Age* 20 March 1971:62; *Age* 22 December 1990:44). The City of Melbourne building permit card does not record any modifications to the building (MBAI).

Figure 3. Extract from a survey showing the subject site, outlined in red, and the adjoining City West Telephone Exchange fronting after Little Bourke Street. Note that this survey was amended after 1948. (Source: Mahlstedt 1948 section 1 no 16)

Figure 4. The Lonsdale Telephone Exchange in 1969 after construction was completed. (Source: NAA 1969: series B6295, item: 2157A)

Figure 5. Excavation for the Lonsdale Telephone Exchange showing the back wall of the 1937 City West Telephone Exchange building. (Source: NAA 1966: series B6295, item: 1609B)

Figure 6. The subject building in 1985. (Source: Butler 1984: property key 105711)

By the late 1960s, satellite and microwave technologies had integrated Melbourne's telephones into a global communications system (Healy 2008) and in 1987, Telecom (created in 1975 following the abolition of the Postmasters General Department) announced that it would open a Mobilenet cellular

CONTEXT

mobile telephone service, with the Lonsdale Telephone Exchange one of twelve base stations in Victoria to which Mobilenet users could subscribe (*Age* 25 May 1987:35).

It is believed that ownership of the subject building was transferred from the Commonwealth government to Telecom (later Telstra Corporation) in 1986.

The Telstra Corporation presently occupies the whole of the building.

Commonwealth Department of Works, designer

The Commonwealth Department of Works was established in 1901 to look after the creation of public works in the newly federated nation. Although the agency has operated under different titles in its history – it was known as the Department of Works from 1952-73 – it is commonly referred to as the Commonwealth Department of Works (CDW) to distinguish it from state-based agencies. The Department was responsible for the design, construction, alteration and maintenance of Commonwealth buildings and other engineering works. Its offices were located in Melbourne until 1929, when they were transferred to Canberra. A period of intensive works were carried out by the CDW during and immediately after World War Two, as the Department managed the building of essential infrastructure as well as significant postwar planning (Smith 2006). By the early 1970s, the activities of the CDW were slowly declining; its functions were transferred to the Department of Housing & Construction in 1978; then the Department of Transport and Construction in 1982 and from 1987, it was known as Australian Construction Services. The vestiges of the CDW were sold off to an engineering firm in 1997 (Willis 2012).

PDC Construction, builder

P D C Construction built several large-scale buildings for the Commonwealth government in the 1960s. In 1963, for instance, they completed the Commonwealth government printing offices, Canberra, and the Commonwealth Centre, Sydney (since demolished) which, with 19 above-ground floors, was Sydney's largest building at the time, and the second tallest to the AMP Building, Sydney, built 1959 and comprising 26 above-ground floors (Emporis 2019). PDC constructed the National Library, Canberra, concurrent with the construction of the subject building (*Age* 16 March 1967:17).

SITE DESCRIPTION

The Lonsdale Exchange Building at 447-453 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, is a 15-storey face brick building constructed in 1969 in the Post-War Modernist style, which also demonstrates some aspects of the early Brutalist style. Located on the southern side of Lonsdale Street between Queen and William streets, it also has a secondary point of access from Barry Lane.

In plan form the building is an elongated rectangle, with the narrow northern frontage being the main façade to Lonsdale Street, although all four elevations are substantially identical in terms of material and articulation. The internal structure is reinforced concrete, and the facades are horizontal panels of nonloadbearing brown brick cladding laid in stretcher bond that probably reflects the internal structural grid. Each panel is defined by an expressed metal perimeter frame, and on some elevations (especially the northern façade to Lonsdale Street), the panels incorporate a full width horizontal window opening that comprises four individual sashes. The windows appear to be the original aluminium frames, and some modules are infilled with aluminium louvres, also probably original.

At street level, the facade is clad in black granite panels. The building has a wide modern, glazed central entrance with automated doors beneath a large metal ventilation grille. On the eastern side of the main entrance, a large, ornate brass British Coat of Arms is embedded in a recessed granite panel. A Royal Cypher of Queen Elizabeth II is mounted on the western side of the entrance in raised brass lettering. Beneath the cypher is 'Lonsdale Exchange Building 447-457 Lonsdale Street', which is the older address, in the same raised brass lettering.

Part of the building fronts Barry Lane on the eastern elevation which comprises two service entrances and a carpark. Two older buildings, on either side of the service entry, directly abut its eastern wall.

Overall, the building is a simple but refined building characterised by its strong disciplined modularity and the absence of any decorative elements other than the coat of arms and other elements that identify the building for its key role in the Commonwealth communications system. The building does not appear to have undergone any major alterations since its construction in 1969.

INTEGRITY

The Lonsdale Exchange Building is highly intact with very few changes visible to the original or early fabric of the building. The building retains its original built form and scale. The nonloadbearing face brick panels defined by an expressed metal frame and horizontal window openings – some fitted with aluminium sashes or louvres – are also likely to be original. Unusual within the Hoddle Grid, the ground level is also highly intact with the original or early Coat of Arms, Royal Cypher, raised lettering, granite wall cladding and recessed entry with aluminium ventilation louvre extant. The entrance doors are not original. Overall, the building has very high integrity.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The Post-War Modernist style made its appearance in Australia in the mid-1950s, and was the style of choice for new high-rise development in the capital cities. The Lonsdale Telephone Exchange demonstrates the key aspects of the style in its formal modularity unrelieved by any decorative details. However, it also exhibits some characteristics of the Brutalist style in its solid massing with large areas of unbroken surface material. Buildings of this style were often constructed of reinforced concrete frames with off-form concrete or face brick wall fabric. The stripped back aesthetic of Brutalist architecture was particularly well utilised for institutional or industrial buildings where large expanses of glazing were not critical for their interior functionality.

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 Lonsdale Telephone Exchange. 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)

CONTEXT

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

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

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

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

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

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

CONTEXT

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)

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

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)

CONTEXT

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)

Exchange Buildings

The following examples are comparable with the Lonsdale Telephone Exchange, being of a similar use, although their style, construction date and scale varies. The images and descriptions below are provided by CoM Maps unless stated otherwise, with images dating from c2000 or later.

Batman Exchange, 376-382 Flinders Lane, 1956-57 (Recommended as individually significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review)

Designed by the Commonwealth Department of Works, the Batman Exchange has an unusual asymmetrical façade treatment with a combination of masonry (brick) with a glass curtain wall section.

Figure 7. 376-382 Fliners Lane, built in 1956.

Former Russell Street Automatic Telephone Exchange and Postal Building, 114-120 Russell Street, Melbourne, 1948-1954, 1999-2001 (Recommended as individually significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review)

The former Russell Street Automatic Telephone Exchange and Postal Building (now Hero Apartments) at 114-120 Russell Street is an example of a substantial government building designed in the interwar Functionalist style and completed in 1954. It has the strong horizontal emphasis of expressed façade elements and windows, and other characteristics typical of the style, but also demonstrates a number of eclectic and innovative features that are more derivative than typical of the style.

Figure 8. 114-120 Russell Street, built in 1948-1954.(Source: Context 2018)

CONTEXT

Telstra City West Exchange Building, 436 Little Bourke Street, Melbourne, 1937 (HO1054)

A seven storey brick purpose built telephone exchange building. Designed by the Commonwealth Government Architect John Smith Murdoch in a Georgian Revival style and built in 1937. It joins another telephone exchange at 447 Lonsdale Street that was built in 1965.

Figure 9. Telstra City West Exchange Building, 436 Little Bourke Street, Melbourne, built in 1937.

Analysis

The Lonsdale Exchange Building at 447-453 Lonsdale Street is an example of a substantial telephone exchange building designed in the postwar period with elements of the Post-War Modernist style while also demonstrating some aspects of the early Brutalist style. It exhibits a number of features that are indicative of its purpose-built functionality – such as the limited number of windows and large unbroken surfaces – making it difficult to compare with other examples. As a specific and unusual building typology, postwar telephone exchange buildings are not represented in the City of Melbourne Heritage Overlay, as such there are no obvious examples for architectural comparison. Other examples of postwar telephone exchanges in the City of Melbourne, also designed by the Commonwealth Department of Works, include the former Russell Street Automatic Telephone Exchange and Postal Building at 114-120 Russell Street and the former Batman Exchange at 376-382 Flinders Lane (both recommended as individually significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review) and the Telstra City West Exchange Building at 436 Little Bourke Street (HO1054). Although altered, the addition to 114-120 Russell Street is sympathetic to the original building and does not detract from appreication of the original building. 376-382 Flinders Lane and 447-553 Lonsdale Street are both highly intact.

As a type, the three examples are representative of postwar public works and are good examples of the technical and utilitarian application of design for Commonwealth communication services. These are all refined examples of postwar Melbourne buildings that demonstrate some key aspects of the Post-War Modernist style, while incorporating features that express their utilitarian interior functions and a major design aesthetic. The Telstra City West Exchange Building at 436 Little Bourke Street (HO1054) is comparable as a purpose built, government designed exchange but is distinguished by its architectural style and period of construction. It is the only telephone exchange included in the City of Melbourne Heritage Overlay.

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	Ungraded
Central City Heritage Review 1993	Ungraded
Review of Heritage overlay listings in the CBD 2002	Ungraded
Central City Heritage Review 2011	Ungraded

CONTEXT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Lonsdale Exchange Building	**PS ref no:** HOXXXX
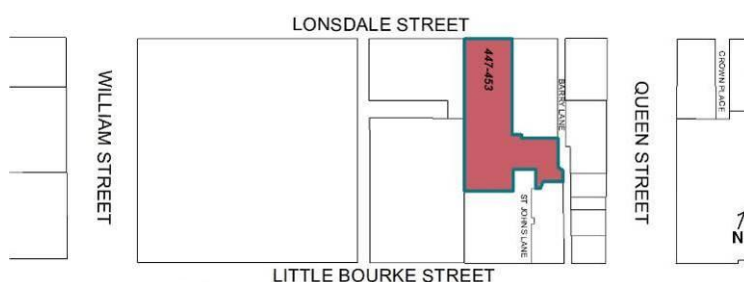
What is significant?

The Lonsdale Exchange Building at 447-453 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, built in 1969 by PDC Construction to a design by the Commonwealth Department of Works is significant.

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

- Original building form and scale;
- Unpainted face brick cladding and expressed metal perimeter frames, original pattern of fenestration and window openings;
- Recessed ground level entry, black granite tiled cladding, British Coat of Arms, Royal Cypher and *'Lonsdale Exchange Building 447-457 Lonsdale Street'* lettering at street level; and,
- Original aluminium frame windows and louvres.

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

How it is significant?

The Lonsdale Exchange Building at 447-453 Lonsdale Street is of historical, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

The Lonsdale Exchange Building is historically significant for its ongoing civic function and association with the longer civic use of the site. From 1911 to the present day, the site has been used for the provision of telephone services to the city, and is located within an area which encompassed government, administration and communication services. Construction of the Lonsdale Telephone

Exchange demonstrates the breadth of Commonwealth powers in the decades that followed World War Two, a shift that occurred in the postwar period and resulted in increased construction of buildings in city centres by the Commonwealth Department of Works. As a large-scale purpose-built building completed in 1969, replacing the earlier 1911 exchange building and supplementing other earlier postwar telephone exchanges in the city, it also demonstrates the growth and changes in telecommunications by the mid to late 1960s. (Criterion A)

The Lonsdale Telephone Exchange is significant as a highly intact and refined example of postwar Commonwealth government development in the City of Melbourne. The Lonsdale Exchange Building utilises the Post-War Modernist style that characterised this wave of development, but with aspects of the Brutalist style that are commensurate with its very specific function. It is representative of the modern purpose-built telephone exchange buildings designed by the Commonwealth Department of Works in the 1960s and 1970s to store large technical equipment and switchboards as well as accommodating an expanded workforce. (Criterion D)

The Lonsdale Exchange Building is aesthetically significant as a well-executed design by the Commonwealth Department of Works. It is a substantial, disciplined, refined and highly intact example of a Post-War Modernist style multi-storey building incorporating features of the Brutalist style, such as large areas of solid masonry walling and a lack of large areas of glazing. These characteristics are overlaid with the repetitive modularity of the Post-War Modernist style. In the subject building, this external expression of its utilitarian interior functions contributes to its rigid, minimalist design aesthetic. (Criterion E)

Primary source

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

CONTEXT