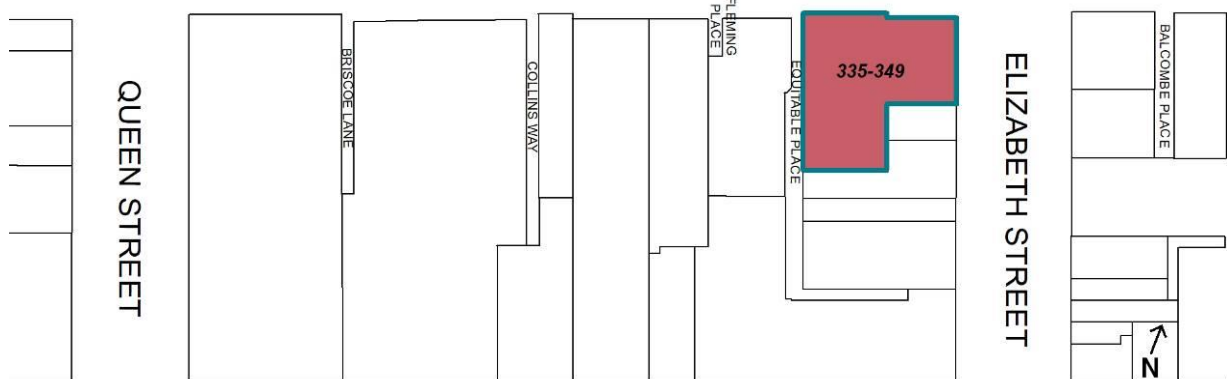


| | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------|
| SITE NAME | Equitable House |
| STREET ADDRESS | 335-349 Little Collins Street, Melbourne |
| PROPERTY ID | 105929 |



LITTLE COLLINS STREET



SURVEY DATE: October 2018

SURVEY BY: Context

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| HERITAGE INVENTORY | N/A | EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY | No |
| PLACE TYPE | Individual Heritage Place | PROPOSED CATEGORY | Significant |
| | | FORMER GRADE | C |
| DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST: | Stephenson & Meldrum (1925), Unknown (1968) | BUILDER: | Reinforced Concrete & Monier Pipe Construction (1925), Unknown (1968) |
| DEVELOPMENT PERIOD: | Postwar Period (1945-1975) | DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION: | 1925, 1968 |

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 |
| HISTORIC THEMES | DOMINANT SUB-THEMES |
| 3 Shaping the urban landscape | 3.2 Expressing an architectural style |
| 5 Building a Commercial City | 5.4 Developing a retail centre |
| 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 |
| 3 Building a commercial city | 3.2 Business and finance |

LANDUSE

| THEMATIC MAPPING AND LANDUSE | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1890s | Warehouses and yards |
| 1920s | Hotels |
| 1960s | Retail |

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

Equitable House, 335-349 Little Collins Street, Melbourne, constitutes two distinct built forms arranged in an L shape formation: one of 11 storeys fronting Little Collins Street, built in 1925; the other of 13 storeys fronting Elizabeth Street, built in 1968. The 1925 building was designed by architects Stephenson & Meldrum in the interwar Commercial Palazzo style. The 1968 building is an interesting combination of both the late twentieth century Brutalist and Post-War Modernist styles (architect unknown). The site was long associated with James McEwan, whose wholesale and retail ironmongery business, James McEwan & Company Ltd, occupied part of the subject site for some 113 years, from 1852 to 1965. James McEwan & Company was acquired by Bunnings in 1993.

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

Interwar Period

Expressing an architectural style

The interwar period brought with it a surge in tall building construction in the central city, made possible by the use of structural steel and reinforced concrete framing. In response, a height limit was imposed by the City Council in 1916, dictated by the limitations on fire-fighting at that time. A maximum height of 40 metres (132 feet) was dictated for steel and concrete buildings, a limit that was not broken until the 1950s. Commercial buildings in the 1920s were mainly of the Commercial Palazzo style, as exemplified by Harry Norris's Nicholas Building in Swanston Street (1925). The style was an early attempt at creating a style suitable for the tall building. It was divided into a base, shaft and cornice, much like a Renaissance palazzo. The scale, however, was greatly enlarged, with the shaft stretching up to 10 storeys. By the 1930s, the soaring height of the new office towers was embraced and the vertical thrust emphasised in the Commercial Gothic style and the Jazz Moderne. Landmark examples include, respectively, Marcus Barlow's Manchester Unity Building (1929-32) and the Tompkins Bros' Myer Emporium in Bourke Street (1933) (Context 2012:19-20).

Developing a retail centre

By the early 1840s, Elizabeth and Swanston streets, from the Town Hall in the south-east to the General Post Office to the north-west, had become the focus of retail activity, influenced also by the location of the Western Market in the west of the city which operated as the city's premier wholesale fruit and vegetable market until 1930 (May 2016:176). The Eastern Market opened in 1847 as a fruit and vegetable market on the corner of Stephen Street (later Exhibition Street) and Bourke Street and drew retail further east.

Department stores offered customers a wide range of goods, organised into 'departments', under the one roof. In Melbourne, department store Buckley & Nunn, which opened in 1854, established Bourke Street as the preferred retail strip.

Development slowed during the economic depression of the 1890s, only recovering with the revival of immigration in the first decades of the twentieth century. Although affected by World War One in the period 1914-1918, by the end of the 1920s Melbourne's population had reached one million people. In the first decades of the twentieth century, most residents moved out of the city to the new suburbs, with the retail and office sectors rapidly taking up available properties (Marsden 2000:29-30).

After 1920, chain department stores grew rapidly, opening branches or new stores in central Melbourne. Department stores elevated 'fashion, drapery and furnishings to a level of luxury and range which differentiated it from the everyday or rural emporium' (Young and Spearritt 2008). With increasing car ownership and widespread distribution of shopping catalogues, department stores attracted shoppers from both the suburbs and rural areas, consolidating the central Melbourne area as the state's preferred retail destination.

Postwar Period

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).

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).

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 comprises two allotments located at the corner of Elizabeth Street and Little Collins Street. The current multi-storey office building at 343-349 Little Collins Street constitutes two distinct built forms arranged in an L shape formation: one of 13 storeys fronting Elizabeth Street, built in 1968; and the other of 11 storeys fronting Little Collins Street, built in 1925 (CoMMaps).

The land comprising 335-349 Little Collins Street is part of Crown Allotment 9 of Block 13, first purchased by John Highett for £42 in 1837 (CoMMaps; DCLS c1839).

In 1852, James McEwan and John Houston supplied goods to storekeepers on the Victorian goldfields from a building at the subject site, which is located on the south-western corner of Elizabeth and Little Collins streets. In 1855 the partnership between Houston and McEwan was dissolved and James McEwan established a wholesale and retail ironmongery from the same building (*Age* 16 July 1965:8; Lethbridge 2011). In 1870, a new five-storey building was built on the site for McEwan. In 1924, Deans oil and colour store and James McEwan & Co operated from two buildings around the corner at 335-349 Little Collins Street (the balance of the subject site), which were both demolished in 1924 (*Argus* 17 January 1924:13).

McEwan House was the name given to the new building constructed in 1925 at 335-349 Little Collins Street (the part of the subject building fronting Little Collins Street and abutting Equitable Place to the west). Stephenson & Meldrum architects prepared plans for the reinforced concrete building in 1924. Carried to the then maximum height limit of 40 metres (132 feet), and containing 68,000 square feet of floor space, the building was taller than Collins House, located nearby, and a landmark in the area (*Argus* 17 January 1924:13). McEwan House was designed to integrate with the existing five-storey building 1870 building fronting Elizabeth Street, which has since been demolished (see Figure 1)

The 11-storey building had two main entrances off Equitable Place and three lifts (see Figure 2). The five-storey structure featured two lifts and had only one entrance, via Elizabeth Street. Three openings connected the buildings along their party wall. Special consideration was given to fireproofing McEwan House, which was achieved using the modern principle of proofing each floor separately and involving the Fire Underwriters' Association in the preparation of the plans (*Argus* 17 January 1924:13). The Reinforced Concrete & Monier Pipe Construction Co Pty Ltd constructed the building in 1925 with C S Steele as the consulting engineer. McEwan House was numbered 343-349 Little Collins Street and 119-125 Elizabeth Street in 1925 (Mahlstedt Map Section 1, no 14, 1925).



Figure 1. Showing the five-storey 1870 McEwan's building (demolished c1967) facing Elizabeth Street at the corner of Little Collins Street in 1953. (Source: Gordon 1953, SLV)

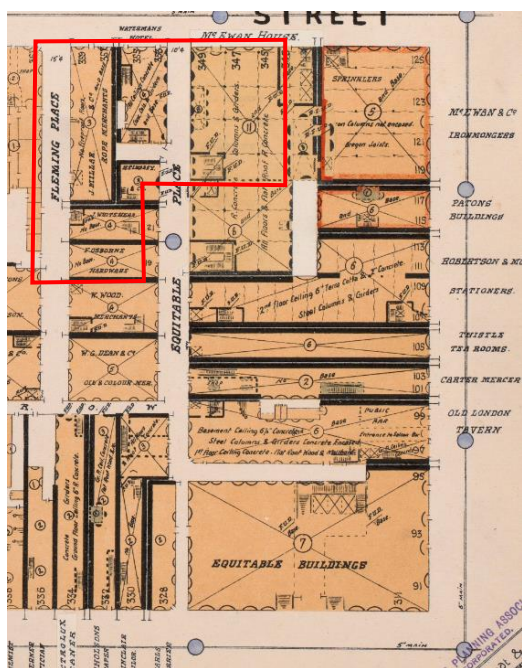


Figure 2. Detail from a 1925 Mahlstedt plan showing McEwan House outlined in red. Note the openings between the two built forms. (Source: Mahlstedt Map Section 1, no 14, 1925)

In 1926, the new building fronting Little Collins Street was tenanted by a diverse range of occupants including a jeweller, hairdresser, architect, manufacturing agent, builders, legal manager and broker (S&Mc 1926). The building had a tearoom on the second floor and the seventh floor was home to the Amateur Sport Club until 1960. The ground floor was used by McEwan as his main retail space (S&Mc 1926, 1960). In 1965, McEwan's moved to a new building between Bourke Street and Little

Collins Street, which had an available selling area double that of the subject site (Age 16 July 1965:8).

By 1968 the five-storey 1870 building was demolished and the 13 storey component of the subject building facing Elizabeth Street was constructed as an office block for 443 Little Collins St Pty Ltd and Stalbridge Chambers Pty Ltd, architect unknown (RB 1969). By 1969 both the Elizabeth Street and Little Collins Street frontages of the building were addressed 343-349 Little Collins Street (RB 1969; S&Mc 1970). The Elizabeth Street projection was constructed of reinforced concrete (see Figure 3 and Figure 4).

The old and new buildings were joined by a wide arcade, named Elizabeth Arcade, indicating that the 1925 McEwan's building had been purchased by the same owners (see Figure 3). The north, east, south and west elevations all featured points of access as well as a prominent splayed corner entrance at the junction of Little Collins and Elizabeth streets.

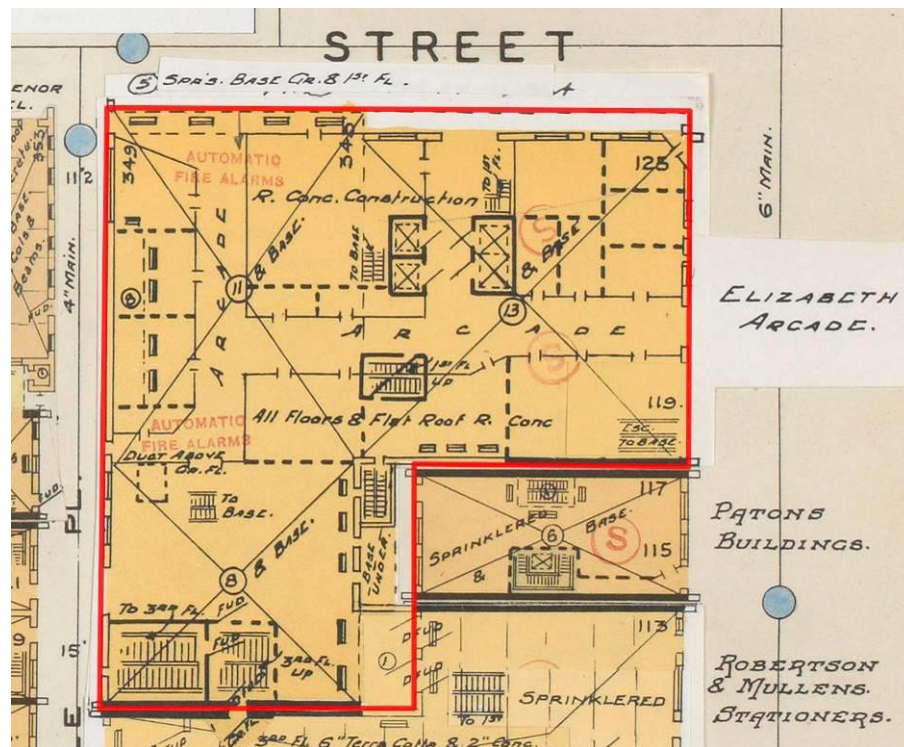


Figure 3. Detail from a 1948 Mahlstedt plan (amended in the 1960s) showing Equitable House at 335-349 Little Collins Street, outlined in red, in the late 1960s. (Source: Mahlstedt Map Section 1, no 14, 1948)



Figure 4. Photograph of Elizabeth Street west showing the 1968 building at 335-349 Little Collins Street between 1968 and 1972. (Source: Halla c1972, SLV: H36133/618)

Refurbishment and restoration works were carried out to Equitable House in 2006 at a cost of \$1,200,000 (Cordell 2018). The works included alterations to the façade of the building, external painting, alterations to the canopy and installation of signage (Cordell 2018).

Equitable House, probably named after the abutting laneway, Equitable Place, was internally subdivided in stages from 2005 to 2008. It currently contains one residential property, 121 offices, 19 retail shops and 7 food and drink outlets (CoMMaps).

James McEwen & Company Limited

The owner of McEwan House, James McEwan, was an ironmonger and wholesaler of hardware who had traded on the Ballarat Goldfields in the 1850s. An emigrant from Britain, he established James McEwen & Company Limited wholesale and retail ironmongery business in c1855. Initially traded on Elizabeth Street, the company later opened premises on Lonsdale Street as well as in Geelong. After McEwan's death in 1868, his England-based suppliers and partners William Kerr Thomson and Samuel Renwick carried on the business under the name of 'James McEwan & Company Limited'. In 1870 they commissioned the construction of the five-storey store on the corner of Elizabeth and Little Collins Streets, Melbourne (Lethbridge 2011).

The Australian National University holds the archives of McEwans Limited, the summary of which contains the following information:

James McEwan & Company Limited traded as a private company until 1887 [by which time, in addition to ironmongery, McEwan's was selling glassware, dinnerware and other ceramics] when it was incorporated as a public company and floated on the London Stock Exchange. Following the deaths of both Renwick, in 1888, and Thomson, in 1893, James McEwan & Company Limited suffered severe financial hardship. The London Bank of Australia acquired the Company in 1905...McEwan's Limited was formed in 1927 to acquire the shares of James McEwan & Company Pty Ltd and its subsidiaries...

In 1951 McEwan's Limited was floated as a public company and listed on the Melbourne Stock Exchange. By 1965 McEwan's had moved its main city store from the corner of Elizabeth and Little Collins Streets to Bourke Street, Melbourne...Around this time other McEwan's stores were established in the suburbs of Melbourne - Camberwell (1966), Clayton (1961), Croydon (1964), Dandenong (1964), Footscray (1966), Frankston (1970), Geelong (1966), Moonee Ponds (1963), Niddrie (1973) and Sunshine (1974) - as well as in Victorian regional shopping centres at Brandon Park (1970), Chadstone (1960), Doncaster Shopping Town (1969), Forest Hill (1964), Northland (1966), Southland (1968) and High Point West (1975).

In 1970 the first of McEwan's 'Magnet' discount hardware and timber stores was opened on a four-acre site in the outer Melbourne suburb of Ferntree Gully...Through McEwan's (Mildura) Pty Ltd the company operated two stores in Mildura and one at Red Cliffs in the north-west of Victoria. In Queensland the subsidiary, Williams McEwan's Pty Ltd, had stores at Burleigh Heads and Southport. Another subsidiary, Britains McEwan's Pty Ltd (acquired in 1969), operated three stores in Brisbane. McEwan's had now become one of the largest merchants of its kind, specialising in hardware and builders' supplies. It had 23 stores in Victoria, 5 in Queensland and 2 in the Australian Capital Territory...Following a successful takeover bid by Repco Limited, McEwan's Limited was delisted from the Stock Exchange on 28 July 1982 (Lethbridge 2011).

McEwan's was acquired by Bunnings in 1993.

Stephenson & Meldrum, architects of the Little Collins Street building

The firm Stephenson & Meldrum was established in 1921 by Arthur Stephenson (b1890, Melbourne) and Percy Meldrum. Stephenson enrolled at the Architectural Association School in London in 1918, at which he met instructor and architect Percy Meldrum. It is also where Stephenson met Donald 'Skipper' Turner. In 1936, Donald Turner, whom Stephenson also met at the Architectural Association School, joined the partnership and ran the Sydney office of Stephenson, Meldrum & Turner. The following year, Meldrum resigned as a director and the firm became Stephenson & Turner. By 1939, the firm had Melbourne and Sydney offices and totalled 80 employees (Goad 1999).

The firm became renowned for their revolutionary designs of health facilities. They designed most of the major and minor metropolitan and regional hospitals in Victorian and most Australian states, extending also to Asia and the Middle East. Stephenson & Turner's projects numbered many and

included numerous banks throughout Victoria, commercial commissions and industrial, educational, recreational, residential and religious projects, as well as projects for the World Fair and Australian embassy (Goad 1999).

Stephenson & Meldrum were the architects of Newspaper House, Collins Street, Melbourne (1933), the Mercy Hospital, East Melbourne (1934-5) and the Royal Melbourne Hospital, Parkville (1936-41), the latter in association with W A M Blackett. In addition, Stephenson & Turner are noted for designing the Royal Banking Chambers, Collins Street, Melbourne (1939-41), additions to the east of the Chemistry Building at the University of Melbourne (1963) and the General Motors Holden factory in Dandenong (1955-56) (Goad 1999).

The firm expanded and became one of the largest architectural practices in the southern hemisphere, with offices in Newcastle, Singapore, Adelaide and New Zealand, employing 3000-4000 people at its peak. It became known as 'the colossus of Australian architectural practices'. In 1995, architect John Castles merged with Stephenson & Turner to form Castles, Stephenson & Turner (Goad 1999).

Reinforced Concrete & Monier Pipe Constructions, engineers

The Monier system of construction was patented in 1867 by Joseph Monier, a French manufacturer of garden ware who made planter pots of coarse mortar reinforced with a grid of small-diameter iron bars. The technique and patents were gradually extended to cover, amongst other things, arch bridges. Monier appears to have sold his patents in various territories outright and died in poverty in 1906 (*John Monash*).

Following his retrenchment by the Melbourne Harbour Trust stemming from the 1890s depression, civil engineer John Monash (from 1918, Sir John Monash) established his own private practice with friend and fellow engineer J T Noble Anderson. Anderson had obtained patent rights from contracting engineers Carter Gummow & Co for the Monier system of reinforced concrete (Serle 1986).

Architectural historian Miles Lewis writes that 'Monier...was true reinforced concrete, with a complete theory and system of calculation to ensure that the steel was suitably disposed to take tension and shear forces' (Lewis 1988:11).

As Victorian agents for the system, Monash and Anderson began constructing bridges and had plans for concrete pipe manufacturing until they found themselves in legal and financial strife following the failure of one of their bridges in Bendigo.

In 1905 Monash established the Reinforced Concrete & Monier Pipe Constructions Co Ltd after having transitioned to erecting buildings, monopolising concrete construction in Victoria for several years to follow (Lewis 1988:11). From 1905 to 1914, John Monash was the engineering director of the company.

SITE DESCRIPTION

335-343 Little Collins Street

The building at the corner of Elizabeth and Little Collins streets is a 13 storey commercial building constructed in 1968 with frontages to both Elizabeth Street and Little Collins Street. With its use of dark precast non-loadbearing concrete curtain wall cladding to both frontages, it is primarily an example of the Post-War Modernist style. It also exhibits characteristics of the Brutalist style in the robust three-dimensional modularity of the concrete panels.

The facades consist of multiple narrow precast concrete panels, each with a sloping hood and vertical fins at each end to provide a measure of solar protection, and a single fixed aluminium framed window with curved corners. The panels repeat across both facades, with no formal corner element and only a simple horizontal flush parapet, as is typical of the style. The effect of these devices is to create an interesting pattern of light and shade across the façade, which is a characteristic of the Brutalist style.

The retail and entry shopfront to Elizabeth Street has been replaced over time, and there is a heavy cantilevered box awning over the ground floor shopfronts and entry lobby, which is not sympathetic to the fine grained modularity of the façade above.

Overall the building is an interesting combination of characteristics of both the late twentieth century Brutalist and Post-War Modernist styles.

345-349 Little Collins Street

The building, with a primary frontage to Little Collins Street, is a substantial 10 storey interwar commercial corner building constructed in 1925 in the interwar Commercial Palazzo style. It exhibits some of the main characteristics of the style, including projecting pilasters dividing the façade into four vertical bays sitting above a strong rusticated base.

The principal façade to Little Collins Street is of painted render, probably over non-loadbearing brickwork walls. The façade is separated horizontally into three layers, being the rusticated base, interim repetitive office floors over seven levels separated by spandrels, and a prominent cornice, although the cornice now surmounts an open floor level that is probably the result of the alterations carried out in 2006. The elevation is somewhat unusual for this style in that it is asymmetrical, with a vertical element at the eastern end, defined by a pair of pilasters and terminating in a decorative pediment above the cornice level. It is possible that some decorative elements were removed when the building was refurbished in 2006.

The painted render side wall of the building fronting Equitable Place is simple and unadorned with regularly spaced window openings at all levels. The elevation steps down from the Little Collins Street frontage to a height of seven storeys.

All of the original windows to the main Little Collins Street and the northern section of the Equitable Place elevations have been replaced with single pane aluminium framed windows that are not openable. The original windows were probably steel framed and multi pane, and some of these survive in the southern section of the building along Equitable Place.

The ground floor has been significantly altered with new glazed shopfronts on both frontages. Above the ground floor is a narrow cantilevered box awning.

INTEGRITY

The 1968 building fronting Elizabeth Street is largely intact with its precast non-load bearing concrete curtain wall and aluminium framed windows to both elevations extant. At street level, shop fronts have been altered over time and there is a heavy cantilevered box awning. Overall the building is of high integrity.

The 1925 building fronting Little Collins Street is relatively intact with its original height and built form legible. The building retains characteristic elements of the interwar Commercial Palazzo style with a strong rusticated base, interim repetitive levels and a prominent cornice. Alterations include an open

floor level above the cornice line and a lack of decorative detailing and extensive rustication at the base which was typical for the style, suggesting some details may have been removed in the 2006 alterations. The fenestration pattern appears to be original along both elevations. However, all windows to Little Collins Street and the northern section of Equitable Place have been replaced with fixed aluminium framed windows. Some original windows survive further down Equitable Place. At ground level all shop fronts have been altered over time and a narrow awning added. Notwithstanding these alterations, overall the building is of moderate integrity.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The Equitable House site at 335-349 Little Collins Street comprises two adjoining buildings in different styles constructed fifty years apart. The 1925 interwar building is comparable to other Commercial Palazzo or Chicagoesque buildings in central Melbourne, while the 1968 building exhibits key characteristics of the Post-War Modernist style.

The 1925 building on Little Collins Street uses structural steel and reinforced concrete framing, which became popular building materials in interwar Melbourne, inspired by Chicagoan architecture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Departing from load-bearing brick walls, many 1920s examples employed these new building methods that allowed windows to become larger and more prominent on facades, whilst also allowing for increased building heights. Most of the buildings from this period were designed in the interwar Commercial Palazzo or Chicagoesque styles, both of which derived from the rebuilding of the core area of Chicago after the 1871 fire. Although they were characterised by an expressed structural system of concrete columns and floor plates, these examples typically included elements of classical detailing (albeit restrained) in the form of a rusticated base, expressed pilasters, projecting cornices and decorative mouldings.

The following examples are comparable with the 1925 building fronting Little Collins Street, being of a similar use, scale, style and/or construction date. The images and descriptions below are provided by CoM Maps unless stated otherwise, with images dating from c2000 or later.

Capitol Arcade, 115 Swanston Street (HO747, HO502 The Block Precinct)

An 11 storey concrete building with a ground floor arcade and a basement. Designed by Walter Burley Griffin and his wife Marion Mahony in association with Peck & Kempter in the Chicagoesque style. Built by John Monash's Reinforced Concrete & Monier Pipe Construction Company in 1924. Of special note is the auditorium/theatre with its Art Deco lighting and decor. Subdivided in stages from 1999 and concluding with the residential units in 2003.



Figure 5. Capitol Arcade, 115 Swanston Street, built in 1924.

Cavendish Houses, 27-37 Russell Street, 1927 (Significant in HO506 Flinders Lane Precinct)

A nine storey brick and concrete warehouse with a basement. Designed in the Greek Revival style by A & K Henderson. Built for the softgoods manufacturers Debenhams (Australia) Proprietary Limited in 1927. Refurbished to a design by David Earle & Associates and subdivided into residential units and ground floor retail with the addition of the top two floors in 1994.



Figure 6. 27-37 Russell Street, built in 1927.

London Stores, 341-357 Bourke Street, 1925 (HO545, HO509 Post Office Precinct)

The London Stores consists of three interconnected buildings. The 10 storey London Stores concrete building with basement (shown in picture below) is comparable to the subject building. Built in 1925 to the design of HW & FB Tompkins, the interwar building exhibits elements of the Classical Revival and Commercial Palazzo styles.



Figure 7. 341-357 Bourke Street, built in 1925.

Hardware House, 386-392 Little Bourke Street, 1926 (Significant in HO1205 Guildford & Hardware Laneways Precinct)

The six-storey corner building was built in 1926 for the new club premises for the Hardware Club, which was originally formed in the mid-1890s as a social club for members of the hardware trade. Within a year, it had 148 members, and within ten years, it boasted over 1000 members. It was designed by architect J V Ward and constructed by the Concrete Building Company.



Figure 8. 386-392 Little Bourke Street, built in 1926.

Cavendish House at 27-37 Russell Street, is particularly comparable to the 1925 section of Equitable House due to its scale and architectural style. Both sites demonstrate characteristics of the

Commercial Palazzo style, notwithstanding that the Statement of Significance for Cavendish House refers to it as being designed in the Greek Revival style. The building is of a similar scale and shares many characteristics with Equitable House, including a façade divided into equal bays by projecting pilasters terminating at a cornice, albeit with a finer degree of decoration. Equitable House is distinguished by the asymmetry of its vertical element located at its eastern end as well as the relationship it has to the adjoining 1968 building. Although Cavendish house has a higher level of integrity than Equitable House, the two buildings are comparable in terms of their scale and for architectural style. Despite changes to its façade, Equitable House retains elements that are characteristic of the Commercial Palazzo style

In regard to the 1968 building at the corner of Elizabeth and Little Collins streets, the following examples are comparable.

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)



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)



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)



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)



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



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 Kalle, 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

The Royal Insurance Group Building at 430-442 Collins Street, constructed in 1965, is particularly comparable to the 1968 section of Equitable House due to its scale and architectural style. Both sites demonstrate characteristics of the the Post-War Modernist style with some aspects of the Brutalist style also in evidence. The Royal Insurance Group Building is somewhat higher at 18 storeys, but the facades of both buildings exhibit multiple narrow precast concrete panels with no formal corner element The precast panels to the Equitable House facades are of particular interest as they are three dimensional with a sloping hood and vertical fins at each end to provide a measure of solar protection and to create repetitive patterns of light and shade across the façade, a characteristic of the Brutalist style.

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**

D

**Central City Heritage
Review 1993**

C

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

Ungraded

**Central City Heritage
Review 2011**

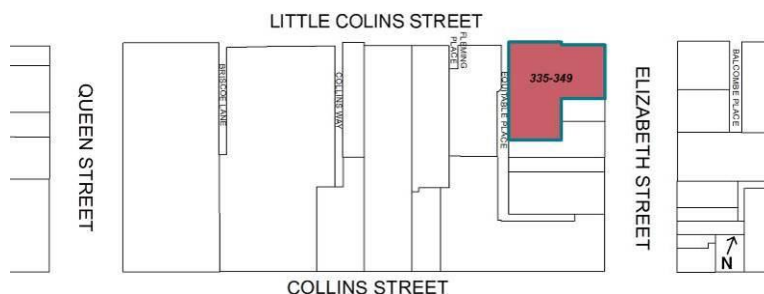
Ungraded

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Equitable House



PS ref no: HOXXXX



What is significant?

Equitable House, at 335-349 Little Collins Street, Melbourne, comprising two structures, one built in 1925 and the other built in 1968, is significant.

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

- Original form and scale of both buildings;
- Original composition of façades comprising multiple narrow precast concrete panels with aluminium windows (1968 building);
- External configuration of facades demonstrating aspects of the interwar Commercial Palazzo style and wall surfaces of painted cement render (1925 building); and
- Original steel framed windows on the Equitable Place façade (1925 building).

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

How it is significant?

Equitable House at 335-349 Little Collins Street is of historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

Equitable House, comprising two structures, one built in 1925 and the other built in 1968, is historically significant for the evidence it provides of two waves of retail and office development in Melbourne in the 1920s and post-World War Two. The building reflects the growth and progress in the city in the 1920s and 1960s that resulted in architecturally designed, company-named buildings being erected. The 1925 component of the building at 335-349 Little Collins Street, McEwan House, is historically significant for

its long association with wholesale and retail ironmongery business James McEwan & Company Ltd (1852-1965). The business commenced in Melbourne at the corner of Elizabeth and Little Collins streets supplying goods to storekeepers on the Victorian goldfields, and it retained a presence there for some 113 years. The company prospered and, by the 1970s, McEwan's had become one of the largest merchants of its kind, specialising in hardware and builders' supplies, with 23 stores in Victoria, five in Queensland and two in the Australian Capital Territory. McEwan's was acquired by Bunnings in 1993. (Criterion A)

The building fronting Little Collins Street, constructed in 1925 to a design by architects Stephenson & Meldrum, is significant as a relatively intact example of interwar commercial development in central Melbourne, in the interwar Commercial Palazzo style. Along with the Chicagoesque style, the Commercial Palazzo style characterised this interwar wave of development within the Melbourne CBD. The 1925 building demonstrates key characteristics of the style. This includes a strong vertical emphasis resulting from projecting pilasters and mullions, the pilasters dividing the façade into four vertical bays sitting above a strong rusticated base, a substantial cornice, and large horizontally proportioned windows separated by articulated spandrels at each floor. It is unusual in that it is asymmetrical, with a vertical element at the eastern end that is defined by a pair of pilasters, terminating in a decorative pediment above the cornice level. (Criterion D)

The building fronting Elizabeth Street, constructed in 1968, is significant as a largely intact example of postwar commercial development in central Melbourne, which utilised the Post-War Modernist style that characterised this new wave of development. Buildings designed in this style represented the new modernism in their modular, industrial aesthetic incorporating features such as external sun shades, consistent access to daylight, open floor plans, air conditioning and centralised lift and service cores to meet new standards for commercial office accommodation. (Criterion D)

The façade of Equitable House with multiple narrow precast concrete panels with no formal corner element, which are of particular interest as they are three dimensional with a sloping hood and vertical fins at each end for solar protection and which create repetitive patterns of light and shade across the façade, a characteristic of the Brutalist style. Although the designer of the 1968 building is not known, it is an important 1960s Post-War Modernist building demonstrating a sophisticated and well-detailed resolution to the challenges posed by postwar commercial design. (Criterion D)

Primary source

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

