

PROFESSIONAL CHAMBERS

HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT

110-118 Collins Street, Melbourne

June 2024

Prepared for

THE HOUR GLASS

Prepared by

LOVELL CHEN



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Professional Chambers is located on, and this report prepared on, the lands of the Wurundjeri people who have been custodians of this land for thousands of years. We acknowledge their stories, connection to land, water and culture which is embedded in Country. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and acknowledge that this report includes a post-contact history that forms only a small part of the ongoing story.

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| 20230146 | 1 | Heritage Impact Statement | 11/06/2024 | KW |
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Cover image: Professional Chambers, Collins Street East

Source: Ussher and Kemp Architects, State Library Victoria

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Heritage Impact Statement (HIS) has been prepared on behalf of The Hour Glass to accompany a permit application to Heritage Victoria for alterations to the façade of the Professional Chambers building at 110-118 Collins Street, Melbourne which we acknowledge is located on Wurundjeri Country (Figure 1). The works will include the introduction of signage and accessibility features.

In preparation of this report, reference has been made to the following:

- architectural documentation prepared by Woods Bagot, dated 7 May 2024, and numbered: TP1000, TP2200, TP2203, TP3001, TP3201, TP3202, TP3203, TP3204, TP5401, TP5402, TP5403, TP5404, TP5405, TP7900
- presentation package including renders prepared by Woods Bagot, dated May 2024

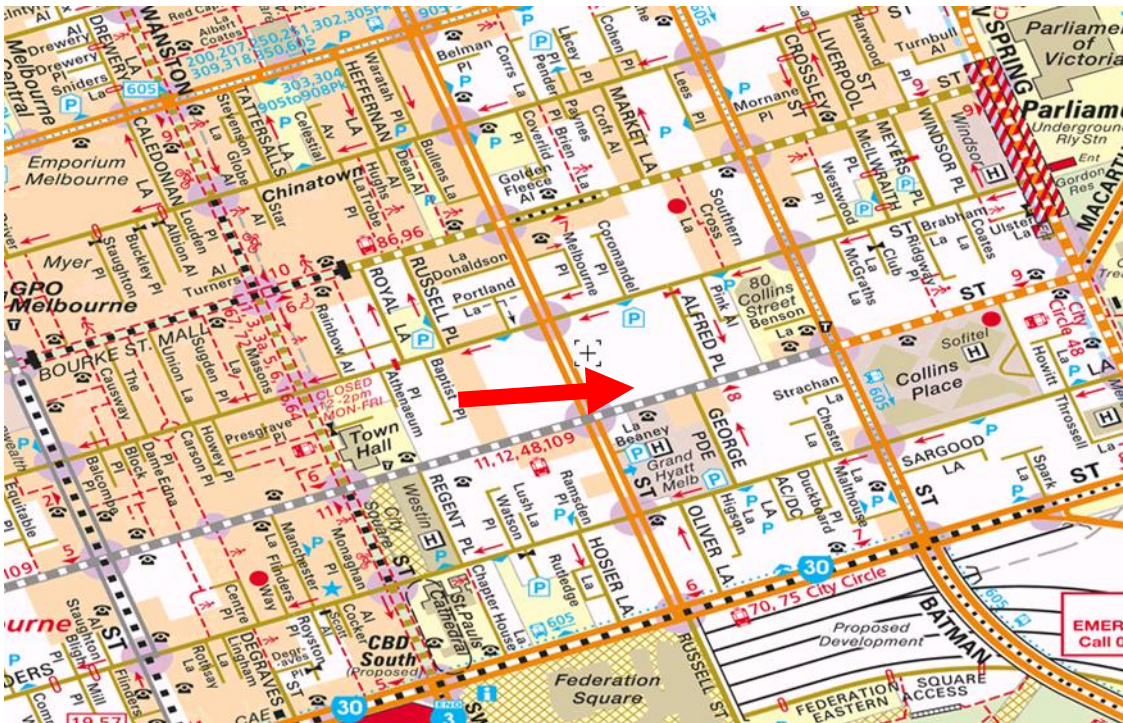


Figure 1 Plan showing the location of the Professional Chambers as indicated by the red arrow

Source: www.street-directory.com.au

1.1 Background

A pre-application meeting was held with Heritage Victoria on 25 January 2024 in relation to the proposed works. Following the meeting, correspondence was provided on 31 January 2024 summarising the discussion and the view of the heritage officer. The relevant sections of this correspondence are reproduced below:

At the meeting I advised that some elements were satisfactory, being the perpendicular clocks and the brass rails and others required further information/consideration. My advice on the other elements of the proposal are as follows:

Upper storey flags - the visual impact of the flags is unlikely to cause concern but we would want to ensure that their attachment and fixings will not cause damage to the heritage fabric, directly or indirectly. Information on their fixing mechanism would be required and assurance that they will not cause future waterproofing issues due to penetrations into any waterproof membranes.

Window signage - provided all fixing, cabling and illumination details are provided, there is a level of comfort with this element.

Front entry tiles - it is understood that the existing tiles likely date from the 1990s and the intention is to replace them with bluestone pitchers to match the steps and footpath. Officers think it is highly likely that the front entry featured a decorative tiling pattern commensurate with the building's overall presentation and the high-end quality of the tenancy. There is an opportunity to return the front entry to its original state, if evidence of the original flooring can be found. Officers would like to know the results of further research. If further research yields unsatisfactory results, the bluestone pitcher proposal is suitable.

The Hour Glass signage - the semi-opaque nature of the sign does give cause for concern that it will unduly obscure views to the decorative stained glass behind and alter the appearance of the archway. It is suggested that serious consideration be given to designing suspended lettering from the arch instead. This could include subtle, soft illumination if wiring can be delicately integrated.

Roller door - as highlighted in the meeting, there is concern regarding this element. Other security options are available and should be explored. Pursuing this option will require evidence of need, an options analysis and details of where roller shutters have been used appropriately at other heritage places. It is also recommended that any Melbourne City Council policies on roller shutters be checked.

2.0 HERITAGE CONTROLS AND LISTINGS

2.1 Victorian Heritage Register

The Professional Chambers is included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) as place number H0414. The place is of architectural significance to the State of Victoria. The extent of registration is described as follows:

No. 414. Professional Chambers, 110-118 Collins Street, Melbourne, to the extent of the total exterior shell of the building, the roofline and entrance foyer.

It is noted that reference to the entrance foyer is understood to apply to the front entrance portico only and does not extend beyond the main doors.

The Statement of Significance for the place as included in the VHR documentation is reproduced below:

What is significant?

The Professional Chambers building in Collins Street was designed for the Trustees of the Independent Church by Beverley Ussher of the firm Ussher and Kemp. The building was finished in 1908. The three storey red brick structure with attic is styled in a mode eclectically derived from Romanesque, Gothic, Elizabethan and Queen Anne Revival architecture. The construction is of tuck-pointed face red brick decorated with rendered cement dressings and a terra cotta tile roof. The

picturesque roof line with steep gable ends and tall clustered chimneys, the oriel windows and central round arch Romanesque entry with foliated decoration together produces a bold facade to Collins Street. The design reflects Ussher's preoccupation with the Picturesque domestic revival in Victoria and has links with the so-called Queen Anne Revival movement in England.

How is it significant?

The Professional Chambers building is of architectural significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Professional Chambers building is architecturally significant as a picturesque composition drawing on an eclectic range of sources in a street that had traditionally associated itself with a more reserved classicism. It is an unusual commercial work of the architect and the building's picturesque form is emblematic of Beverly Ussher's more abundant domestic oeuvre.¹

2.2 Melbourne Planning Scheme

The Professional Chambers is also individually identified as HO574 in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme (Figure 2). It is noted that this heritage place has been mapped to cover the whole of the site, and does not reflect the indicated extent of registration for the VHR place.

The property is also included in the Collins East Precinct which is identified as HO504 in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme (Figure 3). The statement of significance for the Collins East Precinct is reproduced below:

Collins Street has often been identified as Melbourne's leading street. This is due, in part, to the pleasant amenity and distinctive character of its eastern end. Its relative elevation and proximity to the Government Reserve and points of access to the City provided for its development as an elite locale. Initially a prestige residential area, the Melbourne Club re-established itself here in 1857 and by the 1860s the medical profession had begun to congregate. By the turn of the century it was firmly established as a professional and artistic centre of Melbourne, with part of its fame due to its tree plantations in the French boulevard manner (hence the 'Paris end'), which date from 1875.

A number of significant buildings come together in this precinct to form a series of prominent streetscapes. These include, at the western end, the Town Hall, Athenaeum, and Assembly Hall through to the Scots and Independent Churches, with the Regent Theatre through to the redeveloped T&G building opposite. The eastern end includes the early 19th century residential and artists' studio buildings at the foot of No. One Collins, with the predominantly 20th century intact run to the north featuring Alcaston, Anzac Portland and Chanonry Houses, and Victor Horsley Chambers plus the nearby Melbourne Club.

At all times until the post 1939-45 war period, redevelopment took place in a quiet and restrained manner with an emphasis on dignity, harmony and compatibility

¹ Victorian Heritage Database, *Professional Chambers*, <https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/719/download-report>

with the intimate scale and pedestrian qualities of the street. These qualities are still embodied in significant remnant buildings and other artifacts, despite the intrusion of large developments. The qualities of the street are also embodied in the social functions of the buildings which include elite smaller scale residential, religious, social, quality retailing and professional activities.²

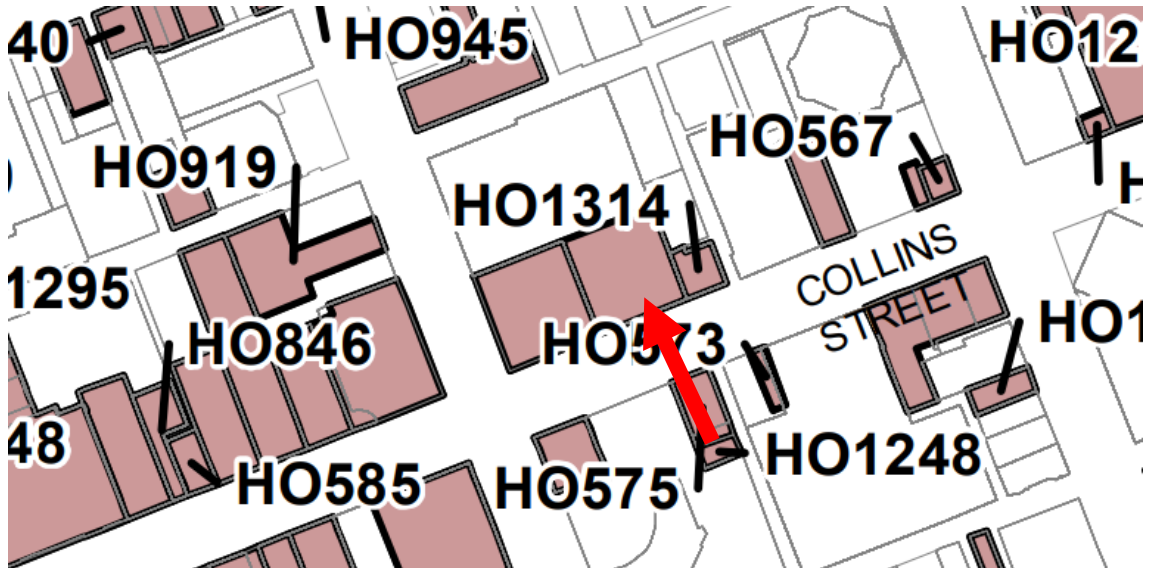


Figure 2 Detail of 8HO2 map showing the individual inclusion of the subject site, indicated by the red arrow
Source: Melbourne Planning Scheme

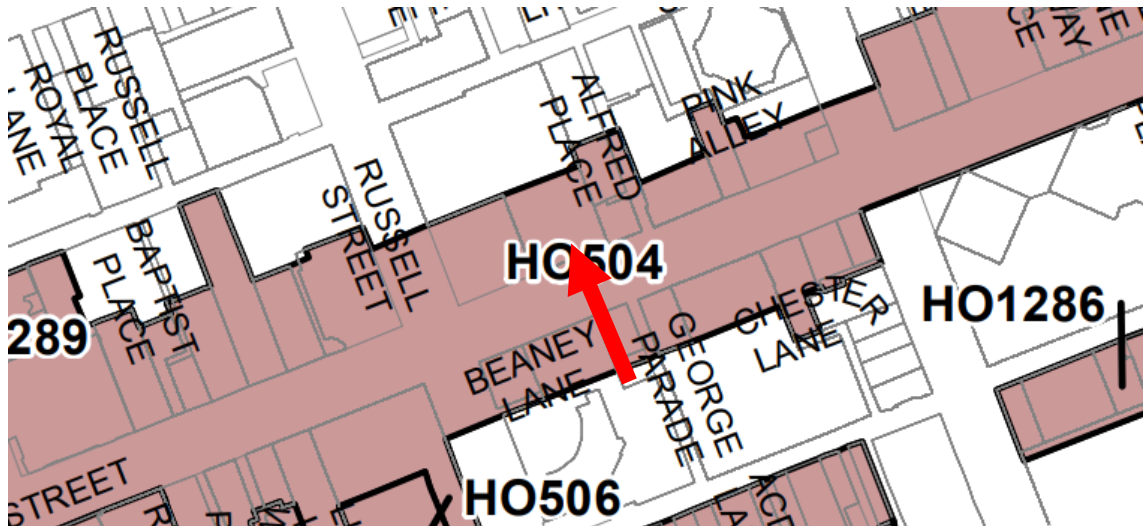


Figure 3 Detail of 8HO1 map showing the inclusion of subject site in the Collins East Precinct, with the site indicated by the red arrow
Source: Melbourne Planning Scheme

² Melbourne Planning Scheme, *Heritage Precincts Statements of Significance February 2020*, Amended April 2022.

2.3 National Trust of Australia (Victoria)

It is also noted that the Professional Chambers is classified by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) as a place of local significance (B3922). There are no statutory requirements as a result of this listing. The statement of significance as prepared by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) is as follows:

Designed for the Trustees of the Independent Church by Beverley Ussher of the firm Ussher and Kemp and erected in 1908. The three-storey red brick structure with attic is styled in a mode eclectically derived from Romanesque, Gothic and Renaissance architecture and decorated with cement rendered elements reflecting mediaeval sources.

It is a distinctive office building in Collins Street, unusually adorned with Gothic and Romanesque motifs and dominated by a picturesque roof line, oriel windows and central round Romanesque entry arch with foliated decoration. The design reflects Ussher's preoccupation with the picturesque domestic revival and the Federation style in Victoria and has links with the so-called Queen Anne movement in England. The interior joinery and decoration is notable.

It is maintained intact and in excellent condition. The office accommodation, largely devoted to medical practitioners, has been sensitively adapted to changing needs.³

3.0 BRIEF HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION

The Professional Chambers, at 110-118 Collins Street is located on the north side of Collins Street, between Exhibition and Russell streets (Figure 4). The Professional Chambers was constructed in 1908 to designs by Ussher and Kemp (Figure 5).⁴ An image from c. 1910 shows the Professional Chambers shortly after the building's completion (Figure 6). The Collins Street façade of the Professional Chambers has undergone limited change from its original form. To the rear of the building however, portions of the structure were demolished over successive periods, leaving the Collins Street façade intact (Figure 7).⁵

The Professional Chambers is a three-storey commercial building with an attic level, constructed in red face brick with render detailing. The building features a central arched entry, flanked by arched window openings at ground level, oriel windows at first and second levels and a steep pitched and gable end roof form clad with terracotta tiles. Prominent ornamental chimneys project above the roof line to the Collins Street façade and the east and west ends of the building.

The main entry foyer, on Collins Street is accessed by bluestone steps, and has a Romanesque arched opening with foliated cement render detailing, beyond which is a shallow foyer enclosed by three Gothic lancet stained-glass doors (Figure 9). The floor tiles to the main foyer are a later alteration (Figure 10) and although extensive research has been undertaken, no drawings or images of the original foyer tilework has been located. At first floor level, directly above the arched foyer is a projecting bay with a castellated balcony above.

³ National Trust Database, *Professional Chambers*, http://vhd.heritage.vic.gov.au/search/nattrust_result_detail/64655, accessed 13 February 2024.

⁴ 'Professional Chambers', *Argus*, Saturday 22 August 1908, p.20, accessed via National Library of Australia.

⁵ Mahlstedt Plans 1910, 1925 and 1948 and aerial photograph from 1970.

On the roof level, is a lift which opens onto the roof. This lift was installed in the c. 1990s as part of the broader works to upgrade the rear of the building including the construction of the adjacent lobby at 120 Collins Street. The lift shaft is constructed of face red brick with doors and surrounds clad in metal.

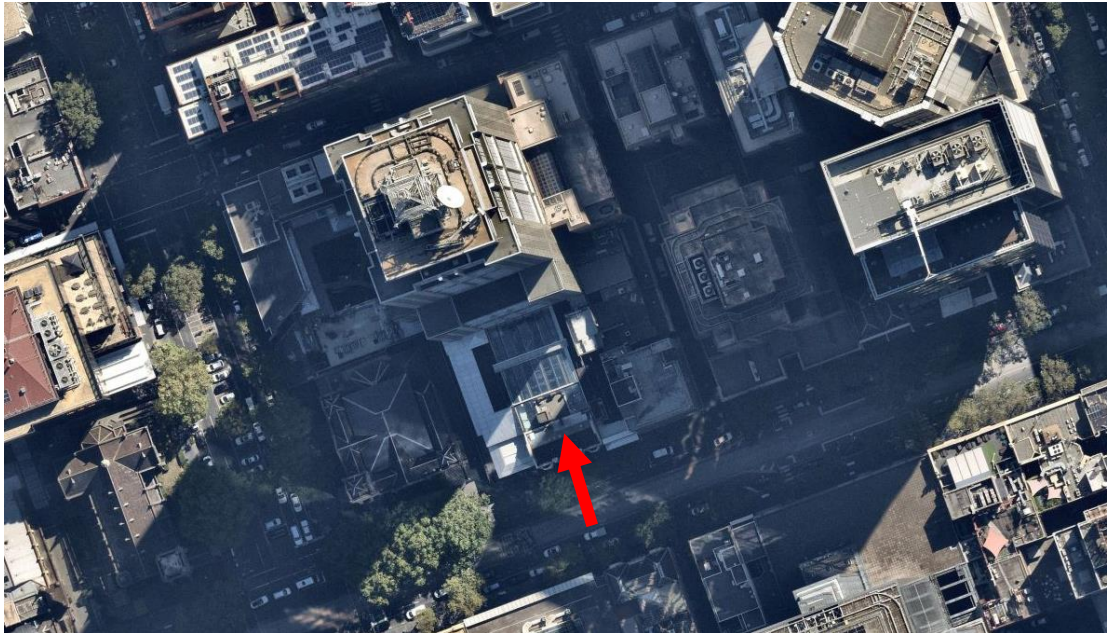


Figure 4 Recent satellite imagery with the subject site indicated by the red arrow
Source: Nearmap, March 2024



Figure 5 Ussher and Kemp depiction of the Professional Chambers, c. 1908
Source: State Library of Victoria: Pictures Collection

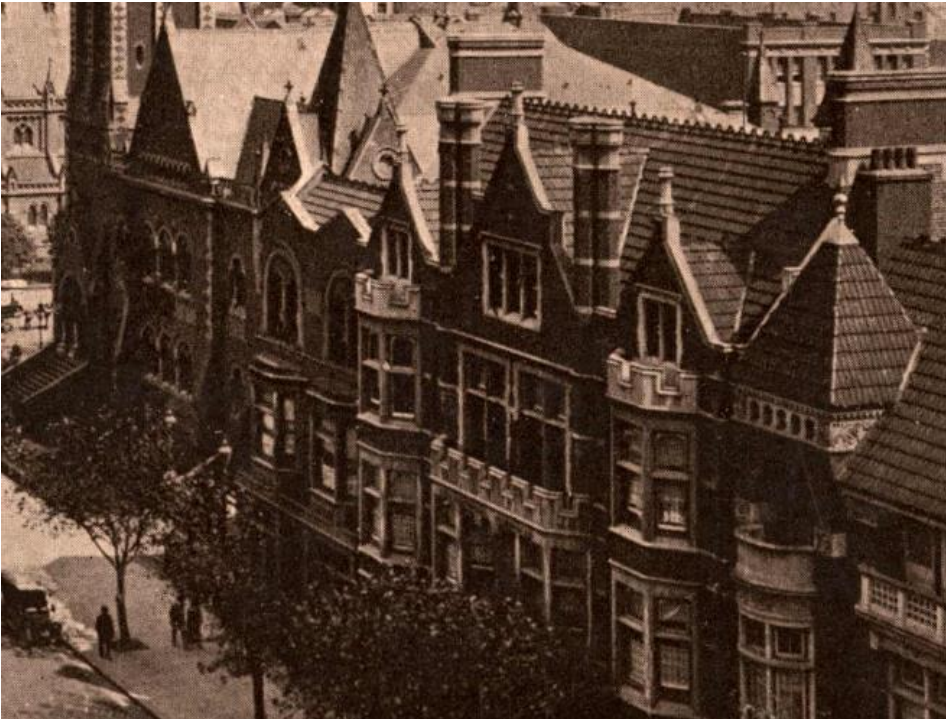


Figure 6 c. 1910 image of the Professional Chambers shortly after construction
Source:



Figure 7 View of the Professional Chambers c. 1971-1980
Source: State Library of Victoria: Pictures Collection

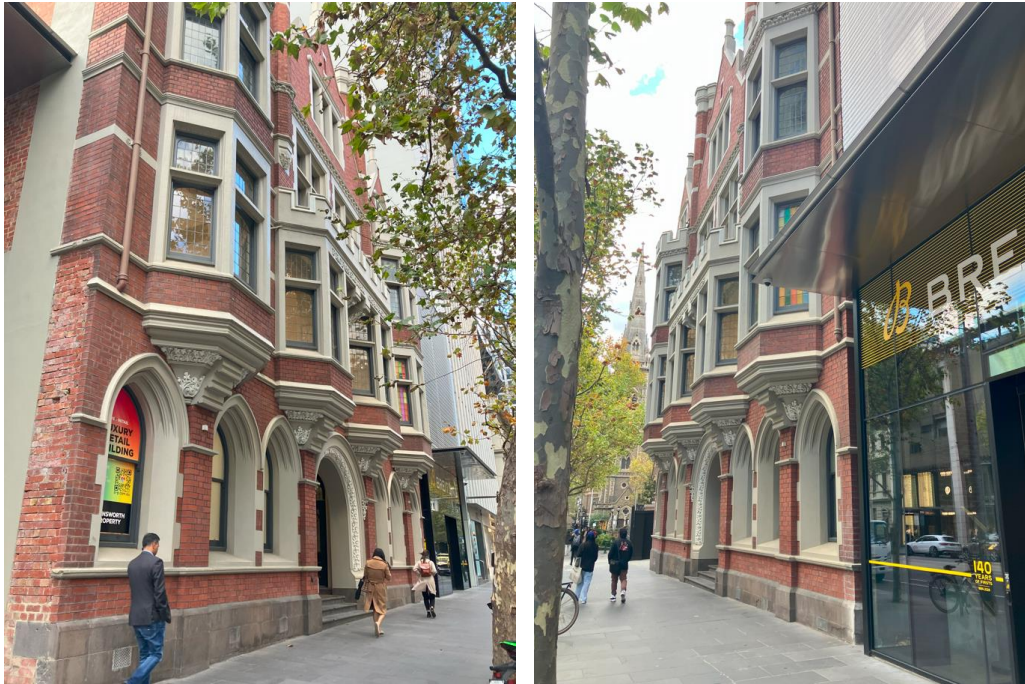


Figure 8 View of the entrance to the Professional Chambers, looking along the street from the west (left image) and east (right image)

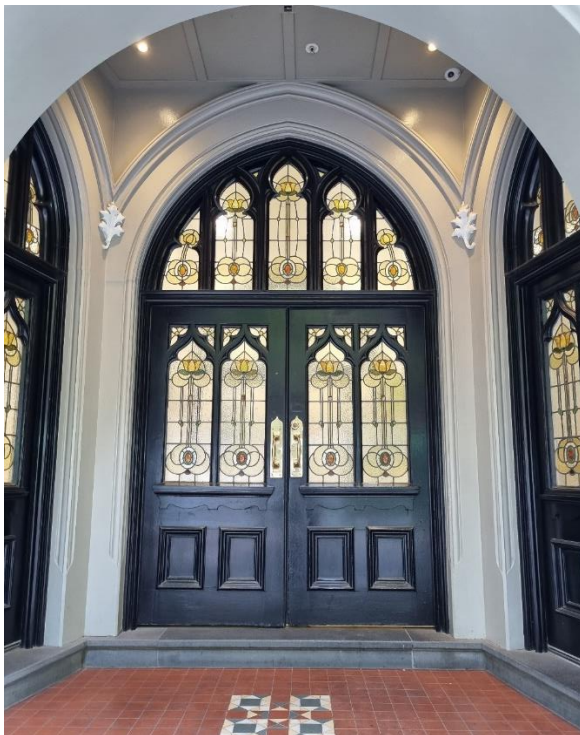


Figure 9 Stained glass doors at entry foyer



Figure 10 Professional Chambers main entrance foyer

4.0 PROPOSED WORKS

The proposed works comprise the installation of commercial signage to the main façade of the Professional Chambers building, re-tiling of the front foyer and the introduction of accessibility measures to the front steps. The works are required to support the occupation of the building by a new tenant. The proposed works comprise:

- Installation of three flags to the balcony at first floor level, to cantilever over the street
- Installation of illuminated signage within the windows of the ground floor
- Removal of the existing tiles in the foyer and installation of new bluestone tiles with a central tile displaying the Hour Glass emblem
- Installation of a new glazed infill panel to the upper section of the existing arch, fixed behind the render detail, displaying 'The Hour Glass'
- Installation of a perforated roller door, located within the foyer, behind the new glazed panel
- Installation of two brass finish handrails to either side of the existing entrance steps
- Installation of light coloured tactile strips to the entrance steps
- Installation of signage to the flanking columns adjacent to the entrance steps
- Installation of two clocks fixed to the façade and cantilevering over the footpath
- Works to the existing lift to modify the existing opening on the roof level

These works are described in detail below.

To the entrance steps it is proposed to install two brass handrails either side of the existing steps. The handrails will be fixed to the top and bottom step using two locking screws into a base plate and the

bluestone steps, with a cover plate. Tactile stripes will be applied to each of the bluestone steps, to the full width between the handrails. The stripe will be applied using adhesive.

The existing tiles in the entrance foyer will be removed and new bluestone laid to the full extent of the foyer (Figure 11). In the centre of the foyer, a single, larger bluestone tile with a brass inset logo of the Hour Glass will be incorporated.

To the inner side of the existing entrance archway, a new steel framed glazed infill panel will be installed (Figure 12). The panel will be fixed into the existing fabric and screwed into the upper section of the arch. The glazed panel will be etched with signage fixed to the etched glass with the tenant brand 'The Hour Glass'. The perforated roller door will also be installed to the inner side of the entrance archway. The roller door drum will be screw fixed to the inner side of the arch, positioned 70mm clear of the ceiling. The level of perforation to the roller door is the minimum level required to provide sufficient security to the building and will have a powder-coated bronze finish.

New signage will be installed to the façade of the Professional Chambers. New brass plaques will be applied to the flanking columns either side of the archway, extending the full width of the columns, with Hour Glass branding. To the outer columns on the ground floor of the façade, two clocks will be installed, projecting over the footpath. The clocks will be fixed to the façade of the building using a custom backing plate with fixings aligned to the mortar joints. It is noted that following occupancy by the tenant, the design of the clocks may be subject to change, but will include a clock and a brand name. It is anticipated that the final design of the clock will be managed by way of a permit condition.

Above the first floor balcony, three flagpoles will be installed to the façade of the building. The flagpole will cantilever through the gap in the castellated detail to the balcony, and will be welded to a custom backing plate which will be fixed to the façade to the existing mortar joints. The flags will include brand names, which will be determined following tenancy occupation.

Within the windows of the ground floor, illuminated signage will be installed. The signage will be fixed to the inner side of the window with all illumination discreetly connected internally. The branding of this signage is to be determined following tenancy occupation, and will be similar to the signage included at the Former Commercial Bank of Australia (H0422). It is anticipated that the final design of the signage will be managed by way of a permit condition.

The existing lift on the roof terrace of the building will be altered to enable a larger opening that is realigned to the centre of the lift shaft from its existing position. It is proposed to demolish in the order of 1.4 metres of the existing lift opening, relocate the lift to the north, and install a new opening with new doors in a bronze finish. The new opening will be 0.9 metres wide, an increase from the existing opening of 0.77 metres.



Figure 11 The existing front entrance steps

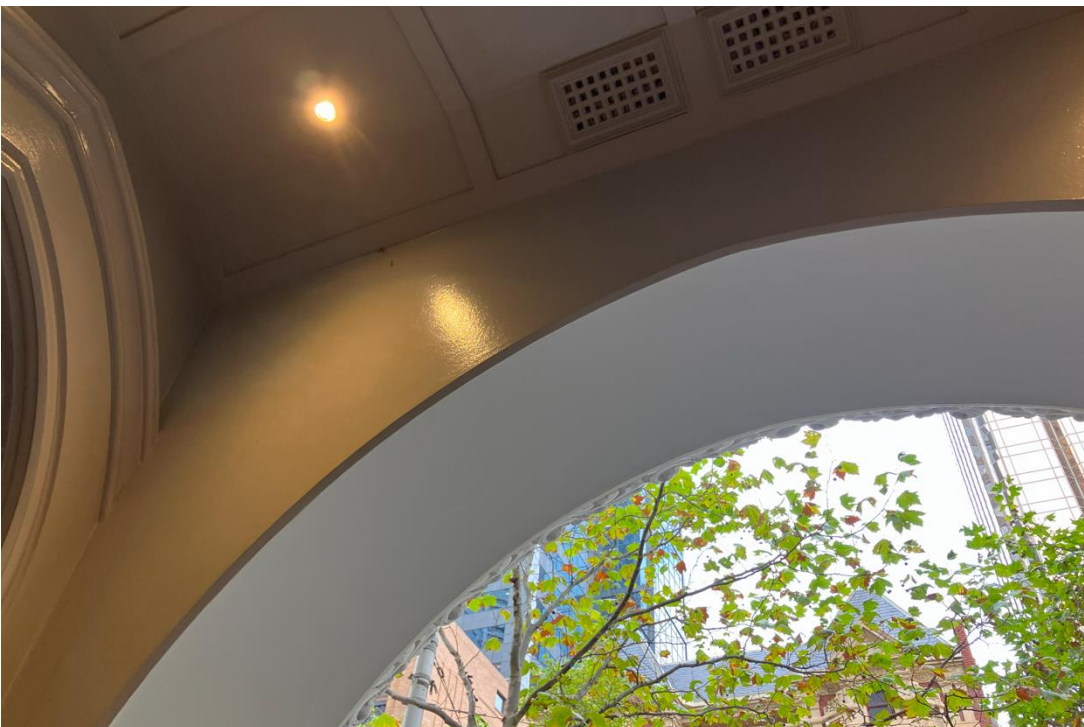


Figure 12 The rear of the entrance archway where the glazed panel and roller door will be installed

5.0 REASONS FOR THE WORKS

The works are required to support a new tenant within the Professional Chambers building including accessibility upgrades, signage, security upgrades and works associated with an increased lift car size.

The Hour Glass, as a high end retailer of watches in the Asia-Pacific region, requires the upgrades to meet the aesthetic and expectations of their clients, and to provide branding and advertising of their products. Given the nature of the merchandise, upgrades to the main entrance of the building, specifically through the addition of a perforated roller door are required to increase the security of the building.

6.0 ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE IMPACTS

6.1 Information to support an assessment against sections 101(2) of the *Heritage Act 2017*

Section 101 of the *Heritage Act, 2017* (Victoria) sets out the considerations which must be made in determining permit applications. As relevant to the proposal, the primary considerations of the Executive Director in determining a permit under Division 2, Section 101(2) are:

- (a) The extent to which the application, if approved, would affect the cultural heritage significance of the registered place or registered object;
- (b) The extent to which the application, if refused, would affect the reasonable or economic use of the registered place or registered object;

6.1.1 *The extent to which the cultural heritage significance of the place or object is affected by the proposal [s. 101(2)(a)]*

The following assessment of heritage impacts has had regard for the cultural heritage significance of the registered place, as described in the VHR statement of significance.

The Professional Chambers is of architectural significance for its picturesque form drawn from eclectic sources in a more classical streetscape, and as an unusual example of the architects work. As noted above, the extent of registration is limited to the external shell of the building including the roof and entry foyer which is understood to be the covered foyer to Collins Street.

The proposed works comprise the installation of commercial branding to the main façade of the Professional Chambers building and alterations to the entrance foyer to include additional access and security measures.

Upper storey flags

The installation of three flagpoles with *The Hour Glass* branded flags, to be installed to the castellated balcony above the oriel bays, will have a minor visual impact to the façade presentation. They will be screwed into the mortar joints of the wall above the balcony, and therefore will not impact or undermine the roof surface of the balcony. The flags will provide additional branding in a discreet and reversible form, which will not impact the identified significance of the place.

Window signage

Whilst the signage will be installed internally to the pointed arched windows to the ground floor, the signage will be a visible element to the external presentation of the building. Many of the heritage listed buildings along Collins Street have illuminated signage to the windows and the installation of this

type of signage will be broadly consistent with the approach taken in the streetscape (Figure 13 and Figure 14). The appreciation and understanding of the original windows will remain understood, with the signage presenting as a contemporary and internal modification related to the new tenant, and one which can be reversed in the future, should it be required.

Further details in relation to the fixing, cabling and illumination of the signage is to be confirmed by the occupant, as this will relate to the specific requirements of the brand. It is noted that all cabling will be internal to the building, with fixing to be discreetly located.



Figure 13 Illuminated signage to window of 68-72 Collins Street (VHR H0422)



Figure 14 Illuminated signage to the 250-252 Collins Street (HO593)

Front entry tiles

As noted in the pre-application comments, the tilework in the entrance foyer is likely to date to alterations undertaken to the building in the 1990s, and may have replaced an earlier more decorative scheme. Extensive historical research has been undertaken, however no original plans of the building beyond MMBW and Mahlstedt fire insurance plans have been located. Early images of the building do not provide detail of the entrance foyer. The only surviving image from the architects Ussher and Kemp provides a detailed view of the front elevation, however does not provide a view into the entrance foyer (Figure 5). As the current tiles sit flush with upper bluestone step, it is unlikely that any original tiles survive beneath the existing. While it is accepted that the original scheme would likely have been a decorative pattern, there is insufficient evidence to provide any detail of the original presentation. On this basis, the introduction of bluestone to this setting is proposed as it references the existing bluestone steps from the street and the adjacent steps into the building. The branded tile in the centre of the foyer will include a brass inlay and will be a discrete addition to the proposed tiling. This alteration will not result in a substantial change in the presentation of the place, and without reliable evidence for the original tilework, presents as an acceptable alternative that could be revised should further information regarding the presentation of the tiles become available at a future date.

The Hour Glass glazed panel

The intent of the glazed panel in the archway is to provide clear indication of the tenancy from the street and when the roller door is in a closed position. The glazed panel has been designed to replicate the general form of the stained glass windows behind, and will have a level of opacity to enable views through to the stained glass details, however will in part obscure views of this detail from more distant vantage points. The entry foyer and the decorative stained glass detailing will broadly remain visible in closer proximity to the building given the elevation of the building from the footpath and the upward

view into the foyer space from the public domain. While it is acknowledged that the glazed panel will be a new visible element, it will be understood as a contemporary addition to the entrance and the overall appreciation of the Professional Chambers building and its architectural significance will be maintained.

The glazed signage is required by the new tenant to identify the location of the tenant within the building and to ensure this is legible when the store is closed and the roller door is in a closed position. The physical impact associated with fixing the glazed panel in place is minimal and will be undertaken to an internal and high level elevation within the entry foyer that is unadorned. There will be no impact on decorative detailing. This addition is also an element that could be removed on a future occasion and the fixing points repaired.

Roller door

The proposed roller door is required to provide sufficient security to the tenancy. Other options have been considered, including more perforated alternatives, however, these options were more vulnerable to sabotage and therefore did not meet the security measures required by the new tenancy. Other alternatives including adding additional security measures to the existing doors would have required significant changes to the existing fabric to achieve the required result, and therefore was dismissed as an option due to the physical impact associated with the works.

The perforated roller door, while obscuring views of the entrance foyer outside of operating hours, will have a level of transparency, which will ensure there will be some appreciation of the foyer space when the roller door is in a closed position. It is acknowledged that this is a change to the presentation of the building and the loss of an appreciation of the foyer as part of the streetscape. It is, however, noted that the installation of the roller door provides protection of the decorative stained glass doors within the entry foyer outside of business hours.

The installation of a roller shutter door is commonplace within Collins Street, including to place included in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme (Figure 15 and Figure 16). As noted above, alternative options have been explored, but have not proved to be sufficient for the requirements of the tenants.

The roller door will be fixed above the arched opening, into the rear of the existing fabric, with no visibility of the fixings from the street. When in an open position, the roller door will have no visibility from the street and will be fully concealed above the glazed panel.

While the installation of the roller door will limit the ability to view the detail of the foyer outside of business hours, the architectural significance of the building will not be impacted by this introduction of this element. The roller door is an element which could be removed in the future should that be required.



Figure 15 Security gate to 139 Collins Street (HO577, HO504)



Figure 16 Mesh security roller shutter to 182 Collins Street (HO846, HO504)

Other elements

The installation of signage plaques to the front façade comprises a discrete alteration in a location where signage was previously located. The new plaques will adopt simple lettering and brass presentation so as not to detract from the architectural and aesthetic significance of the place.

The introduction of clocks to the façade are an addition which is typical of similar merchants within Melbourne (Figure 17 to Figure 19), and comprise a reversible action which will not result in a detrimental impact on the fabric of the place. It is noted that the design of the clocks is subject to approval by the tenant upon occupation and therefore it is requested that the final design is to be managed by a condition on the permit, noting that the design will include a projecting clock, similar to that included in the documentation package.

The addition of handrails and adhesive strips to the entrance steps provide accessibility upgrades which while resulting in a change in presentation, is one which is required, and presents as a discrete and reversible outcome for the place. These works are considered to be minor and largely reversible alterations to the façade to support the new tenant.

The alterations to the lift opening will alter the existing non-original lift shaft located on the roof of the building. This alteration is limited to a non-original addition and will not result in an impact on significant fabric or the identified architectural significance of the place.



Figure 17 Perpendicular *Rolex* clock to 252 Collins Street (HO593, HO502)

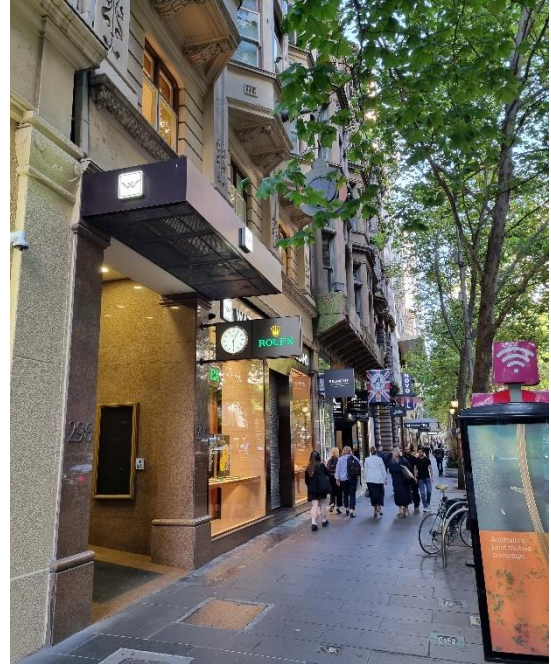


Figure 18 Perpendicular *Rolex* clock to 294-296 Collins Street (HO598, HO502)



Figure 19 The existing clock fixed to the front façade of the Former Commercial Bank of Australia (VHR H0422)

6.1.2 *The impact on reasonable and economic uses [s. 101(2)(b)]*

In considering the reasonable and economic use of the place, the works relate largely to external upgrades to incorporate signage, access and increase security to the place to support a new tenancy within the existing building. The works comprise a series of alterations which will support the new tenant and are considered to be similar to what is expected of occupants of a comparable nature. The works are predominately reversible actions which, while altering the presentation of the façade are not works which will result in detrimental impact on the existing fabric or the assessed architectural significance of the place. Should the proposal be refused, this may result in the tenant seeking an alternative location, and which could impact on the future leasing of the building. A medium to long-term vacancy of the building is not a desirable outcome.

No submission is being provided in relation to economic considerations.

7.0 CONCLUSION

The proposed alterations to the façade, including the introduction of branding and accessibility features, will support the occupation of the building by a new tenant. The new occupant is a high-end luxury retailer requiring increased security, and additional signage to ensure the place is visible and identifiable in the streetscape.

While the works will result in a changed presentation, the alterations are not considered to diminish an understanding of the presentation of the façade, nor impact on the architectural significance of the place. In addition, the works are largely reversible with little to no impact on the existing fabric in the event that there is a change of tenants in the future.