

Proposed Meccaversity  
David Jones (Former Coles), 299-307 Bourke Street, Melbourne

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## Heritage Impact Statement

August 2024

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Contemporary and historical sources utilised in the preparation of this HIS are acknowledged and referenced in footnotes and/or figure captions.

### **Report Register**

The following report register documents the development and issue of the Heritage Impact Statement for the proposed Meccaversity within the Mecca Tenancy at the *David Jones Store (Former Coles)* as prepared by RBA Architects + Conservation Consultants in line with its quality management system.

<b>Project No.</b>	<b>Version</b>	<b>Issued to</b>	<b>Date Issued</b>
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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Purpose

This heritage impact statement (HIS) accompanies a permit application for the proposed Meccaversity within the *Mecca Flagship Store* at the *David Jones Store (Former Coles)*. The subject building is acknowledged as having state level significance through its inclusion on the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR H2154).

This document has been prepared by RBA Architects + Conservation Consultants for Mecca. Its purpose is to provide an assessment of the heritage impact of the proposal on the heritage values of the *David Jones Store (Former Coles)*.

The proposal is outlined in drawings by Studio McQualter and ADP Consulting:

- *Mecca Flagship Melbourne, 299 Bourke Street*, For Information drawings prepared by Studio McQualter (various dates)
- Services drawings (Electrical, Fire, Hydraulic, Mechanical) prepared by ADP Consulting (04.04.24)

## Background

The David Jones retail fit-out has recently been removed from lower ground, ground and first floor levels of the subject building as part of a larger base building programme of works being carried out under heritage permit P34021.

In January 2023 a heritage permit (P36736) was issued by Heritage Victoria to Mecca Brands Pty Ltd for a retail fit-out at ground and first floor levels for the *Mecca Flagship Store*. The permit was further amended in March 2024.

Construction works related to both permits are currently underway and will be referenced throughout this report where relevant.

## 1.2 Location

The subject site is located on the traditional land of the Wurundjeri people, part of the Kulin Nation. The site at 299-307 Bourke Street and 276-286 Little Collins Street, Melbourne lies on the south side of Bourke Street between Elizabeth and Swanston streets. To the east of the site is Sugden Place, to the south is Little Collins Street and to the west is Union Lane.

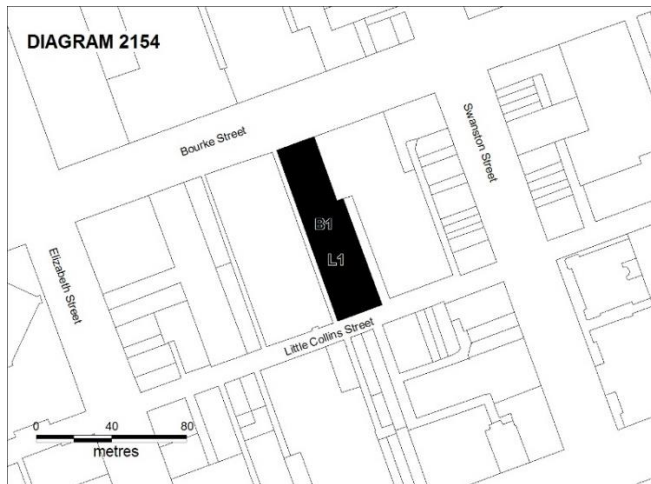


Aerial, showing the approximate boundaries of subject site (dashed red) (Source: Nearmap, 2021)

## 1.3 Heritage Status

### Victorian Heritage Register (VHR)

The subject site is included on the Victorian Heritage Register as *David Jones Store (former Coles)* and identified as H2154. The diagram shows the extent of registration for H2154 which corresponds with the property boundary of 299-307 Bourke Street.



Extent of Registration Diagram No. 2154 with the black section indicating the extent of registration.  
(Source: Victorian Heritage Database)

The extent of registration includes:

1. All of the building marked B1 on Diagram 2154 held by the Executive Director.
2. All of the land marked L1 on Diagram 2154 held by the Executive Director, being all of the land described in Certificates of Title Volume 10275 Folios 384, 385 and 386.

The following Statement of Significance for H2154 derives from the Victorian Heritage Database:

#### What is significant?

The David Jones store on the south side of Bourke Street was built in two stages in 1929-30 and 1938 as the flagship store of G J Coles Pty Ltd to a design by the prominent Melbourne architect Harry Norris. George Coles opened his first variety store in Smith Street in 1914 with the slogan 'Nothing over 2/6', opened a store in Bourke Street in 1924, and by World War II, despite the Depression, the company operated eighty-six stores throughout Australia, many of them designed by Norris. Norris was the architect for G J Coles & Co, and was a frequent visitor to the United States, where he studied the latest trends in American architecture and in retail design, and his work in Melbourne showed a strong American influence. His buildings demonstrate the move towards greater use of colour in facades in the 1920s and 1930s, especially in the use of glazed terracotta. The seven-storey eastern section of the store was built by E A Watts, costing £500,000 for the site, building and fitout, and opened in March 1930. The 1938 four-storey extension by Cockram & Sons matched the original in style but destroyed the symmetry of the first building. The store was famous for its first floor cafeteria, decorated in a Mexican-inspired Art Deco style, the first and largest in Australia and a highlight of shopping trips to the city for many Victorians. The store was sold to David Jones in 1986 and was altered by the architectural firm Bates Smart & McCutcheon; the exterior was left intact but the cafeteria and many of the Art Deco interior features were removed. David Jones is Australia's oldest department store company, having opened their first store in Sydney in 1838.

The David Jones store is a seven-storey reinforced concrete and steel building with a four storey extension to the west, both in a Commercial Gothic style. The facades are clad with striking pinkish-red Wunderlich terracotta faience, with decorative Hispanic/Indian/Jazz details in pink and blue. The first floor windows are arched with wrought iron railings and above these narrow terracotta clad ribs rise up between the upper windows through the decorative parapet above. The metal window frames are painted blue. The Little Collins Street facade is in a similar mode but is less ornate, and its upper levels are clad in cream rather than pink tiles. The original shopfronts have been replaced. Vestiges of the original interior decorative scheme survive in the tiling on some of the first floor columns and in some plaster ceilings on the ground floor.

#### How is it significant?

The David Jones Store is of architectural, historical and social significance to the State of Victoria.

### Why is it significant?

The David Jones store is architecturally significant for its distinctive and intact terracotta facade, making it one of the most exuberant and colourful interwar buildings in the city and an early and flamboyant example of the call in the 1920s for more colour in city buildings. It was the first major Chicago-inspired Commercial Gothic building in Victoria, a style that was later adopted for the Manchester Unity and Century Buildings in Swanston Street, and which exemplifies the American influence on architecture in Melbourne at the time. It is significant as a notable example of the work of the prominent Melbourne architect Harry Norris, a major architect of Moderne style buildings in Melbourne in the 1920s and 1930s.

The David Jones store is historically significant as one of the most important of the retail stores built in Melbourne in the early twentieth century. It is significant for its association with G J Coles & Co, which became a household name in retailing in Australia. The store was the flagship store of the once ubiquitous chain of Coles variety stores for over fifty years, from 1929 to 1987 and its cafeteria was a favourite meeting place for generations of Melbourne people. The site also has an association with the Coles Book Arcade, which was a Melbourne institution for the previous fifty years.

The David Jones store is socially significant as a favourite shopping destination for generations of Victorians.

The *Former G J Coles Building* (File No. B5791) is also classified by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria), at the State level. There are no statutory implications associated with this listing.

### Melbourne Planning Scheme

The *David Jones Store (former Coles)* building at 299-307 Bourke Street and 276-286 Little Collins Street, Melbourne is also included in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as HO768. The extent of HO768 correlates with that of the VHR listing.



Aerial showing HO768. The approximate boundaries of the subject site are outlined in red.  
(Source: Vicplan, HO Map No. 8HO2, Melbourne Planning Scheme)

In the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay there are no specific controls (i.e. internal controls, external paint controls or tree controls) at the subject site as it is included on the VHR.

The site also forms part of the Post Office Precinct, HO509.



## 2 HISTORY

### 2.1 Brief History of Coles

The section is primarily derived from the publication 'Coles, 100 years of quality, service and value.'<sup>1</sup>

Sir George James Coles was born on 28 March 1855 at Jung Jung near Murtoa, Victoria. In 1913 he travelled to the United States where he observed methods of retailing and merchandise layout.

In Los Angeles, Coles visited leading retailers such as wholesale grocer, H Jevne and Co and department stores such as 'The Broadway Store.' In Chicago he visited Butler Bros General Merchants Wholesalers where he learned lessons in employee training, staff facilities, ethics and record-keeping. Coles was particularly impressed by the '5 and 10 cent' variety stores and the American self-serve cafeteria which would serve as inspiration for the establishment of similar cafeterias in Australia in the decades to come.

George returned to Melbourne the following year and immediately opened the first Coles variety store in Smith Street, Collingwood. In 1921 George established G J Coles & Co. Pty Ltd with his brothers Edgar, Kenneth and Norman. In 1924 the brothers opened a store at 327-329 Bourke Street, near the subject site. The Coles stores continued to expand in the 1920s where they stocked a range of departments such as cosmetics, toiletries, underwear, affordable/economical clothing and food.

#### **Coles principles – Quality, Service and Value**

The Coles brothers were known for taking a scientific approach to business, observing, examining and dissecting the market and changing trends. The principles of quality, service and value were at the core of the Coles brand. During the late 1920s and 1930s the slogan 'Satisfaction Guaranteed or Money Cheerfully Refunded' became widely known.

G J Coles ensured his employees were well looked after:

They would have rest rooms, participate in training and be encouraged to continue their education as he had, beyond the confines of the school rooms and universities, and they would receive bonuses in acknowledgment of their efforts. Customers would be treated with courtesy and given the promise of complete satisfaction with their purchases or their money back in full. They would be tempted with appealing window displays and be invited rest from their day's shopping while enjoying the refreshments offered in modern cafeterias.<sup>2</sup>

The Coles business model offered ongoing training and a hierarchical career structure for male employees whereby a storeman or counter salesmen could progress to executive positions. While female employees could not aspire to managerial roles, progressing from a junior to 'head girl' was well respected and included responsibilities such as stock control, supervising female employees and building the 'team spirit' of the store.

The following is an extract from a souvenir booklet dated 1930, celebrating the Coles Flagship Store:

A Human Organisation Serves You!

G. J. Coles has built more than just stores. He has built an organisation of employees, each of whom has had to start at the very bottom. An organisation of employees carefully selected and trained to know the merchandise you buy, and each one endeavouring at all times to give you courteous and attentive service.<sup>3</sup>

In 1926 a social club for Coles employees was formed encouraging camaraderie across the stores. Regular sporting events and inter-store matches were held as well as the annual Coles ball. A library, first-aid and home nursing courses were also among the offerings for employees.

#### **Evolution of the Coles business model**

By 1933, twenty-seven Coles branches had been established and by WWII this had increased to eighty-six stores throughout Australia. The Coles brand continued to adapt with the onset of WWII, as an increased female workforce led to greater demand for ready-made foodstuffs and the cafeteria division of the stores intensified.

<sup>1</sup> Stella M Barber, *Coles, 100 years of quality, service and value*, Coles Supermarkets Pty Ltd, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Stella M Barber, *Coles, 100 years of quality, service and value*, Coles Supermarkets Pty Ltd, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> SLV, 'Souvenir of G.J. Coles & Coy Ltd, New Arcade Store – Bourke to Little Collins Street, Melbourne,' 21 March 1930

In 1956 the Coles variety store adopted a revolutionary approach to retailing in the form of the self-service store with checkout counters, in contrast to the traditional variety store which had a separate counter for each department and a 'Coles girl' that handled the payment. The first self-service checkout Coles store to be adapted to the new business model was Store No. 129 in Balwyn.

In the 1950s and 1960s it was necessary for the business to adapt and embrace the trend for supermarket retailing. The supermarket provided a convenient one stop food market for fresh produce and meat, delicatessen merchandise and groceries. These stores gradually evolved into the Coles supermarket brand that is popular today.

## 2.2 G J Coles Flagship Store (subject building)

Prominent architect Harry Norris was responsible for the design of the subject building, constructed as the flagship G J Coles Store. At the outset Norris was sent by Coles to the United States of America to study the latest trends in chain store layout and building construction.

The subject building was generally built in two stages and designed in a Commercial Gothic style. The seven-storey eastern section was built in 1929-30 while the lower four-storey western section was added in 1938, altering the symmetry of the original façade.

In late 1938-39, Union House at the corner of Little Collins Street and Union Lane was demolished and the western section of the building was further extended to include this part of the site.<sup>4</sup>

Norris was responsible for the design of many of the new Coles buildings built during this period, often in a Streamlined Moderne style.<sup>5</sup>

The design of the subject building is described in the *Heritage Impact Statement (October 2022)* report prepared by RBA Architects for the Mecca Flagship Store (P36767).



Subject building - eastern section built in 1929-30  
(Source: SLV, Manuscripts Collection)



Western addition built in 1939, with new canopy  
(Source: SLV, Records of Coles Myer Ltd.)

<sup>4</sup> 'Record In Building Next Year,' *Herald*, 26 November 1938, p12

<sup>5</sup> David Jones Stores Bourke Street Melbourne Conservation Management Plan, Anthemion Consultancies, March 2009

## 2.3 Interior

The Coles 'No.12' Flagship Store opened on 21 March 1930 as Australia's largest variety store. The lower ground and ground levels held large sales floors with over 3000 items spread across the two levels.<sup>6</sup> At mezzanine level was a quick lunch counter, soda fountain and cake store and at first floor level was a cafeteria.<sup>7</sup>

A description of the lower ground, ground and mezzanine levels is included in the *Heritage Impact Statement (October 2022)* report prepared by RBA Architects for the Mecca Flagship Store (P36767).

### 2.3.1 First-floor Cafeteria

The G J Coles flagship store was famous for its first-floor cafeteria designed by Norris. The interior was decorated in a Mexican variant of the Art Deco style. The extensive tile work was carried out by the Australian Tessellated Tile Company who had over 5000 colours at their disposal and over 2,100,000 tiles were installed in the cafeteria.<sup>8</sup> The mosaic floor was the largest ceramic tile floor in Australia at the time. The fibrous plaster work was carried out by S. Millsom & Sons.<sup>9</sup>

Various descriptions of the colour scheme are reproduced:

On the first floor is a cafeteria, the floor of which is paved with mosaic tiles in greens, black and gold, and the walls are deep cream above a dado of grey, with decoration in blue and terra cotta. The ceiling is deeply panelled and enriched to match the rest of the decorative scheme.<sup>10</sup>

The marble staircase gives entrances from three streets, and direct access is given from each point to a service counter. The walls are tiled 6 feet over the floor level, the colour schemes of the tiles being a light blue-grey background, with inserts of dark-blue, tangerine, block-purple, and gold; over the dado the walls are textured in colour. The whole of the floor is mosaic tile in various colours.<sup>11</sup>

A 1930 souvenir booklet of the flagship store provided details on the latest mechanical equipment installed at the cafeteria.

Two subveyors – the first of their kind in this city - take the dishes from the Cafeteria to the kitchen on the Second Floor, where trays and dishes are automatically taken from subveyors on to conveyor belts, and again from the belts to the dish-washers... From the dish-washer, the dishes return by another subveyor to the servery in the Cafeteria below.<sup>12</sup>

### Configuration and Layout

The cafeteria encompassed much of the first-floor level, although a row of columns (at the junction of the earlier east and west sides of the building) broadly divided the space into two areas.

Early historic photographs show several full height partition walls and cafeteria counters erected in between the row of columns. In some instances, the partition walls awkwardly intersected with the decorative coffered ceiling as evident in the photograph below dated. The partition walls also continue across multiple decorative ceiling panels.

<sup>6</sup> The extant lower ground level was historically referred to as the basement.

<sup>7</sup> *Coles, 100 years of quality, service and value*, Coles Supermarkets Pty Ltd, 2013.

<sup>8</sup> SLV, 'Souvenir of G.J.Coles & Coy Ltd, New Arcade Store – Bourke to Little Collins Street, Melbourne' 21 March 1930

<sup>9</sup> *David Jones Stores Bourke Street Melbourne*, Conservation Management Plan, Anthemion Consultancies, March 2009, p64

<sup>10</sup> 'Retail Houses. Modern Developments' *Building*, 13 February 1933

<sup>11</sup> SLV, 'Souvenir of G.J.Coles & Coy Ltd, New Arcade Store – Bourke to Little Collins Street, Melbourne' 21 March 1930

<sup>12</sup> SLV, 'Souvenir of G.J.Coles & Coy Ltd, New Arcade Store – Bourke to Little Collins Street, Melbourne' 21 March 1930



Circa 1940, Serving counter (soda fountain) at the Coles cafeteria  
(Source: SLV, Record of Coles Myers Ltd, Commercial Photography Co)

A second photograph shows the cafeteria looking towards the Bourke Street windows. At the north end of the cafeteria is a substantial tiled 'column' (now demolished). The column is set within the central ceiling panel and would have partly obscured views across the cafeteria.

It is likely that the freestanding 'column' was one of two subveyors in the cafeteria.



Circa 1940, View towards the Bourke Street windows with soda bar counter in the foreground. Note the north-east stair and 'column' in the background (now demolished) which partly obscures the eastern most window. (Source: SLV, H92.20/697)



Circa 1953, opening in subveyor (Source: SLV, Record ID a41347)

A circa 1940s photograph shows the south half of the cafeteria, facing north. To the right of the photograph is likely the second subveyor in the middle of the cafeteria floor, set within the ceiling panel.



Circa 1940, Cafeteria with counter in the foreground and subveyor to the right. (Source: SLV, Records of Coles Myer Ltd, Record ID 9939752324407636)

The following photographs dated circa 1950, provide a broad view of the east side of the cafeteria from the southern stair (outside the Mecca tenancy) and the area beyond in which the Meccaversity is proposed to be located.

The photos demonstrate that long views across the cafeteria would have been partly obstructed by a combination of intermediary columns in the south-east corner, subveyor columns, cafeteria counters and full height partition walls.



Circa 1950, View from south end looking towards Bourke Street windows. The surviving marble stair is in the foreground.  
(Source: SLV, Record ID 9939752176707636)

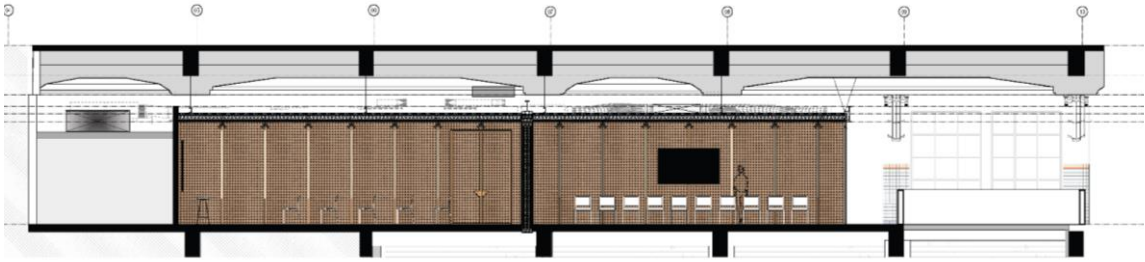


Circa 1953, View from south end of cafeteria, facing towards the Bourke Street windows. Full height partition walls and subveyor columns are indicated.  
(Source: SLV, Record ID a41347)

Both photos show the geometry of the rectangular, coffered decorative ceilings which alternate between small and large rectangular panels. The 'units' of the ceiling is comprised of corbelled perimeter banding which steps down towards the outer edge of the panel. The banding has decorative motifs such as chevrons and triangles. The distance between the central flat plan and lowest band is approximately 1 metre.



1987, Detail of ceiling panel.  
(Source: SLV, FL16505647)



Cros section through coffered ceiling. The existing ceiling is shaded grey. (Source: Studio McQualter)

It is not clear whether the existing decorative ceilings are original or reproductions. In some instances, the central panel (including perimeter band) to the ceiling units has been replaced. The plaster capitals and friezes to some of the columns are reproductions have also been enlarged. Despite this, the original design intent and repetition of ceiling panels remains.

By the 1980s further elements had been added at first floor, reflecting the evolving nature of the cafeteria and upgrades in technology. The elements almost entirely restricted views across the cafeteria. This included a large bulkhead which projected into the first-floor space, low height partition walls and plant screens, a variety of suspended and surface mounted light fittings (fixed directly to the decorative coffered sections), and numerous amounts of hanging signage in prominent locations.



1987, View towards the Bourke Street windows. A large bulkhead (possibly an extraction fan/cabinet) and subveyor column are indicated. (Source SLV, Record ID 9939752299607636)





1987, View towards the Bourke Street windows (Source: SLV, FL16516173)

### **Heritage Fabric**

A photograph dated 1966 provides further detail on the complementary colour scheme of the original wall tiles at first floor and the hexagonal mosaic floor. The original tiled dadoes to the walls and columns/pilasters have Mexican-inspired tiled motifs and the arched windows have tiled architraves. There are Art Deco inspired plaster motifs/capitals to columns/pilasters and to the coffered decorative plaster ceiling.

Remnants of these original elements remain, albeit with varying degrees of intactness.

It is noted that the colour of the walls, columns (above the dado) and ceilings is likely not original.



Circa 1966. First floor cafeteria, Bourke Street windows (Source: SLV, H88.33,104)

In 1986 the Coles store was sold to David Jones Australia Pty Ltd. The interior was altered by Bates Smart & McCutcheon and many of the Art Deco interior features were removed.<sup>13</sup> In 1987 'new suspended plasterboard ceiling and panels' were added to the west side of the first-floor ceiling.<sup>14</sup>

An extensive number of downlights, sprinklers and vents were installed throughout the heritage ceiling as part of the David Jones phase, in part to meet new regulations. The proliferation of fixtures detracts from and interrupts the decorative ceiling.



First floor level ceiling – David Jones phase.

<sup>13</sup> VHD, *David Jones Store (Former Coles) Statement of Significance*

<sup>14</sup> 1987 drawings, *Typical Cross Section* by Bates Smart & McCutcheon, David Jones Store, 299 Bourke Street, Melbourne

### 3 DESCRIPTION

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#### 3.1 Introduction

The David Jones retail fit-out has recently been removed from lower ground, ground and first floor levels of the subject building as part of a larger base building programme of works being carried out under heritage permit P34021.

In January 2023 a heritage permit (P36736) was issued by Heritage Victoria to Mecca Brands Pty Ltd for a retail fit-out at ground and first floor levels for the *Mecca Flagship Store*. The permit was further amended in March 2024.

Reference will be made to both permits where relevant.

#### 3.2 Interior

##### 3.2.1 Ground Floor

All original/early decorative plaster finishes relating to the Coles phase have been largely demolished as approved under the base build permit (P34021). As such, only the structure of the building remains.

Works approved as part of the Mecca heritage permit, and which are currently under way include:

- Demolition of a section of the first-floor floor structure to create a void/mezzanine between ground and first floor levels.
- New escalators connecting the ground, mezzanine and first floor levels.



Ground floor level – new void/mezzanine and escalators (photo courtesy of MECCA)

### 3.2.2 First Floor (Former Coles Cafeteria)

Remnant heritage fabric from the Coles cafeteria phase remains at first floor, albeit with varying levels of intactness. The following would be revealed and celebrated in the approved Mecca fit-out:

- Coffered plaster ceiling to the east side of the building (the plaster ceiling to the west side of the building no longer survives),
- Mexican inspired Art Deco ceramic wall tiling to dadoes along the north, east and west walls, pilasters/columns, and window architraves,
- Art Deco inspired plaster capitals to the upper part of pilasters/columns,
- Early ceramic floor tiles along the west side of the building (a combination of small red and blue square tiles and a hexagonal 'eggshell' tile),
- New flooring would be installed above remnant mosaic tiles with a protective floor barrier in between.



Ceramic wall tiles (May 2024, RBA)

The construction of a full height inter-tenancy wall with glazed highlights is currently underway at the south end of the tenancy and would divide Mecca from the adjacent Rodd & Gunn tenancy. The wall was approved under the base build permit (P34021).



First floor level – full height inter-tenancy wall approved under base build permit (P34021)

## 4 HERITAGE PROVISIONS

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### 4.1 Introduction

While Heritage Victoria is the responsible authority, the subject site is also covered by a heritage overlay in the *Melbourne Planning Scheme*. Before assessing the heritage impact of the proposal of the site, it is necessary to outline the relevant heritage provisions of the *Heritage Act (2017)* and the *Melbourne Planning Scheme*.

### 4.2 Heritage Act (2017)

As *David Jones Store (Former Coles)* (H2154) is included on the VHR, Heritage Victoria is the responsible authority. The following provisions from Section 101 of the *Heritage Act (2017)* are relevant in relation to determining applications:

- (2) In determining whether to approve an application for a permit, the Executive Director must consider the following—
- (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;
  - (c) any submissions made under section 95 or 100;
  - (f) any matters relating to the protection and conservation of the registered place or registered object that the Executive Director considers relevant.
- (3) In determining whether to approve an application for a permit, the Executive Director may consider—
- (a) the extent to which the application, if approved, would affect the cultural heritage significance of any adjacent or neighbouring property that is—
    - (i) included in the Heritage Register; or
    - (ii) subject to a heritage requirement or control in the relevant planning scheme; or
  - (b) any other relevant matter.

The following permit exemption policy applies:

#### **David Jones Store (Former Coles) – Permit Exemption Policy**

The purpose of the Permit Policy is to assist when considering or making decisions regarding works to the place. It is recommended that any proposed works be discussed with an officer of Heritage Victoria prior to them being undertaken or applying for a permit. Discussing any proposed works will assist in answering any questions the owner may have and aid any decisions regarding works to the place. The Conservation Management Plan being prepared by Anthemion Consultancies will assist with the future management of the cultural significance of the place.

The significance of the place lies in its rarity as an early twentieth century department store which has been in continuous use to the present day, and for its fine and intact facades to Bourke and Little Collins Streets. All of the building is integral to the significance of the place and any alterations that impact on its significance are subject to permit application. The existing shopfronts are not original and may be altered or replaced, with a permit. There may be remnants of the original decorative scheme surviving which are not currently visible, and where possible these should be retained.

The following specific activities are permit exempt:

#### **Permit Exemptions**

There are specific permit exemptions for the site. These are reproduced below:

##### **General Conditions:**

1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object.
2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible.
3. If there is a conservation policy and plan endorsed by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it. Note: The existence of a Conservation Management Plan or a Heritage Action Plan endorsed by the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria provides guidance for the management of the heritage values associated with the site. It may not be necessary to obtain a heritage permit for certain works specified in the management plan.

4. Nothing in this determination prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.
5. Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authorities where applicable.

Minor Works:

Note: Any Minor Works that in the opinion of the Executive Director will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the place may be exempt from the permit requirements of the Heritage Act. A person proposing to undertake minor works may submit a proposal to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely affect the heritage values of the site, the applicant may be exempted from the requirement to obtain a heritage permit. If an applicant is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that the permits co-ordinator be contacted.

### 4.3 Melbourne Planning Scheme – Heritage

The subject site is also affected by a heritage overlay (HO768) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme. The heritage provisions are principally outlined at Clause 15.03-1S (Heritage conservation), 15.03-1L-02 (Heritage) and Clause 43.01 (Heritage Overlay).

The building is graded 'significant' in the *Heritage Places Inventory March 2022 (Amended May 2023)* which is an Incorporated Document in the Melbourne Planning Scheme.<sup>15</sup>

Relevant sections of Clause 15.03-1S, 15.03-1L-02 and Clause 43.01 are reproduced below.

#### Clause 15.03-1S – Heritage conservation Strategies

- Identify, assess and document places of natural and cultural heritage significance as a basis for their inclusion in the planning scheme.
- Provide for the protection of natural heritage sites and man-made resources.
- Provide for the conservation and enhancement of those places that are of aesthetic, archaeological, architectural, cultural, scientific or social significance.
- Encourage appropriate development that respects places with identified heritage values.
- Retain those elements that contribute to the importance of the heritage place.
- Encourage the conservation and restoration of contributory elements of a heritage place.
- Ensure an appropriate setting and context for heritage places is maintained or enhanced.
- Support adaptive reuse of heritage buildings where their use has become redundant.

#### Policy Guidelines

Consider as relevant:

- The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, 2013.

#### Clause 15.03-1L-02 – Heritage Objectives

- To encourage high quality contextual design for new development that avoids replication of historic forms and details.

#### Additions strategies

- Ensure additions to significant or contributory buildings:
  - Are respectful of the building's character and appearance, scale, materials, style and architectural expression.
  - Are distinguishable from the original fabric of the building.
- Ensure additions:
- Adopt high quality and respectful contextual design.
- Avoid direct reproduction of the form of historic fabric.

<sup>15</sup> Heritage Places Inventory March 2022 (Amended May 2023), Incorporated Document, Melbourne Planning Scheme

**Clause 43.01 – Heritage Overlay**

Under 43.01-8, Before deciding on an application, in addition to the decision guidelines in Clause 65, the responsible authority must consider, as appropriate:

- The Municipal Planning Strategy and the Planning Policy Framework.
- The significance of the heritage place and whether the proposal will adversely affect the natural or cultural significance of the place.
- Any applicable statement of significance (whether or not specified in the schedule to this overlay), heritage study and any applicable conservation policy.
- Any applicable heritage design guideline specified in the schedule to this overlay.
- Whether the proposed works will adversely affect the significance, character or appearance of the heritage place.

**4.4 Melbourne Planning Scheme - Other****Clause 15.01-11-01 - CBD Lanes****Objectives**

- To maintain and enhance the valued character and function of Melbourne's laneways.
- To maintain and improve the city's lane way network and encourage the creation of new lanes and connections.
- To enhance the climatic conditions and amenity of laneways and encourage more pedestrian use and social activity.
- To encourage activity and interaction between public laneways and adjacent private uses.

Union Lane is identified as a 'Class 3 Lane.' Class 3 lanes may benefit from upgrading and enhancement to realise their full potential with regard to pedestrian amenity and urban design.

**Strategies**

- Protect and create views along lanes that provide a visual link to other streets and lanes in the pedestrian network, or which terminate at notable buildings or landmarks.
- Manage development in and adjacent to Class 2 and Class 3 lanes to encourage these lanes to show signs of Class 1 lanes through improvements in:
  - Connectivity – physical connection through a city block.
  - Active frontages – visual and physical interaction between the lane and the ground floors of the buildings.
  - Elevational articulation – the architectural character of the buildings adjoining the lane and the degree to which this provides aesthetic and spatial interest to the public realm.
- Provide safe, direct, accessible and attractive through block pedestrian routes that improve the legibility of the city.
- Encourage new lanes and retail arcades that respect the traditional street pattern.
- Promote the inclusion of art, landscaping, street furniture and activity spaces
- Encourage small scale tenancies and spaces at ground level to promote retail, service and community goods and services that contribute to the enjoyment of laneways.

**4.5 Conservation Management Plan, *David Jones Stores, Bourke Street Melbourne (2009)***

Heritage places listed at a state level typically have a *Conservation Management Plan* (CMP) that guides the conservation and management of a heritage place. A CMP for the site has been prepared and the relevant sections of it are summarised below:

A CMP for *David Jones Stores, Bourke Street Melbourne*, was prepared for David Jones Pty Ltd, by Anthemion Consultancies. Levels of significance (Primary, Contributory, Little or No Significance) were attributed to various elements at the subject site (G J Coles Store). The relevant elements and their levels of significance are reproduced below:

**Primary Significance** - These elements are fundamental to the significance of the heritage place as it presently exists and an understanding of their significance should guide future actions... These elements should be retained, and if altered then it should be done sensitively with minimal permanent impact.

- Building façade to Bourke and Little Collins Streets;
- Remnant Art Deco tiling to dados and columns on the first floor, remnant floor tiling at least in the reserve area, Art Deco decorative ceiling and cornices, remnant marble stair and balustrade. It should be noted that due to the present fitout, the full extent of any tiling is not confirmed.

While the above list of elements of primary significance is probably the total scope of such elements, it is noted that false or suspended ceilings, shop fitout, cladding and the like are obscuring fabric which may prove to be significant. At such time as anything is revealed it should be further assessed and this CMP amended accordingly.

**Little or No Significance** - These include elements which were of minor importance originally, elements which may have been significant, but which have been considerably altered and which have lost their significance as a consequence, elements which have been added later.

- lifts and escalators;
- all stairs (except the marble stair if it exists)
- all interiors other than for the Art Deco area, former Cafeteria area, on the first floor;
- all fitout, and luminaires;
- shopfronts;
- canopy;
- all services, furniture, equipment and rooftop fabric not otherwise mentioned.



## 5 HERITAGE IMPACT

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### 5.1 Introduction

This section provides an assessment of the proposed Meccaversity on the attributed heritage values of *David Jones Store (Former Coles)* (H2154) with regard to the heritage provisions of the Heritage Act (2017) and the *Melbourne Planning Scheme*. The Meccaversity 'pod' would be introduced to the first floor of the subject building and would be an integral part of the endorsed Mecca Flagship Store.

### 5.2 Background

Several pre-application meetings (a combination of onsite and online) were held with Heritage Victoria, Mecca, Studio McQualter and RBA in 2023 and 2024 to discuss the proposed scheme at various stages of development.

Heritage Victoria expressed concerns primarily regarding the location of the Meccaversity being sited at first floor, the potential impact of the pod on obscuring and restricting views to heritage fabric, and the need to retain a sense of open space at first floor.

RBA continued to assist and provide design recommendations to Mecca and Studio McQualter to ensure the potential impact of the Meccaversity on heritage fabric and the significance of the place was mitigated as much as possible.

Subsequent modifications by Studio McQualter to the Meccaversity were summarised in RBA's email to Heritage Victoria dated 4 June 2024 (extracts are below):

- All mechanical units previously located above the Meccaversity ceiling have been shifted to the west side of the building (above the amenities corridor) minimising visual clutter and increasing views to the heritage ceiling,
- The proposed Meccaversity ceiling would be suspended from fine metal rods that pass through the flat sections of the heritage ceiling. The metal rods would be fixed to existing and new structure hidden above the heritage ceiling,
- The height of the Meccaversity pod has been lowered to increase views to the heritage ceiling,
- Feature lighting has been added to highlight and draw attention to the heritage coffered ceiling above the pod,
- A buffer zone has been created around heritage columns and plaster motifs near the east wall. These elements would remain legible from within the Meccaversity,
- A section of the heritage coffered ceiling near the east wall would also remain legible from within the Meccaversity.

A pre-application meeting was held with Heritage Victoria to discuss the revised design.

On 24 June 2024 a letter was issued by Heritage Victoria to Mecca:

There are serious concerns about the installation of an internal room or "pod", to be known as "Meccaversity", to the approved first floor fitout of the place.

The current permit P36736 was assessed on the basis of opening up and restoring the heritage elements to the first floor. It is noted that the proposed "Meccaversity" would significantly alter the sense of the first floor being an open space and would hide newly restored heritage elements, including the original tiles to the columns near the rear east elevation. The obscuring of recently recovered and restored significant details is not likely to be supported. Further, the base permit (P34021) approved a wall to the first floor to create two tenancies, requiring glazing to the upper portion to allow for light and views between the two tenancies. The proposed construction of the "Meccaversity" would obscure this requirement. The proposed construction of "Meccaversity" to the first floor is not likely to be supported. Any permit application would need to demonstrate why Meccaversity cannot be constructed to the ground floor or basement where there would be a level of comfort with its siting, subject to further design detail.

Approval through a permit application would be required. It is noted that the proposed "Meccaversity" is outside the original scope of works therefore is not suitable to be assessed as amendment to the original permit (P36736) or through the original permit conditions.

Since that time Mecca and Studio McQualter have undertaken further investigations into the design, location, acoustics, services and operational requirements of the Meccaversity to ensure that all feasible options that could have a lesser impact on the heritage place, have been explored.

### Summary of approved works at first floor (Mecca permit P36736)

The northern half of the first floor would remain as a large open space where heritage fabric would be restored/reinstated and revealed in the fit-out for public appreciation. This would include the decorative plaster ceiling, plaster motifs/brackets to the upper parts of the columns, tiled wall dadoes and columns and tiled architraves to the arched windows.

The original ceiling to the west side of the building was removed in the 1980s. As such, a new suspended ceiling and compartmentalised treatment rooms or similar would be installed to the southern half.

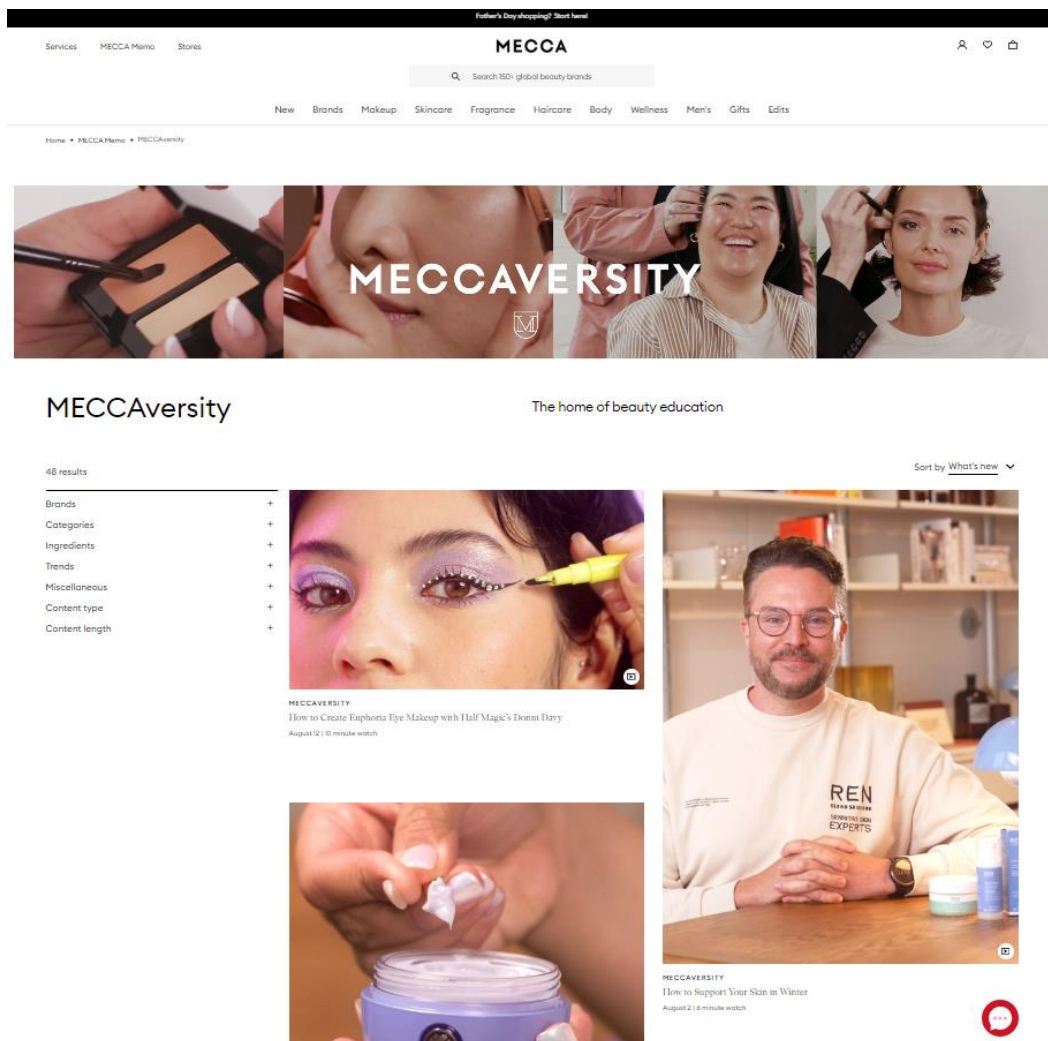
## 5.3 Proposal

The proposal is outlined in drawings by Studio McQualter and ADP Consulting and is summarised below:

- *Mecca Flagship Melbourne, 299 Bourke Street*, For Information drawings prepared by Studio McQualter (various dates)
- Services drawings (Electrical, Fire, Hydraulic, Mechanical) prepared by ADP Consulting (04.04.24)

Mecca was established in 1997 and is a leading retailer in cosmetics, skincare and related products with a substantial in-store and online presence. The Meccaversity pod would be an extension of the established online platform which provides beauty education to staff and customers.

It is anticipated that the Meccaversity pod would provide an on-site destination for staff and customers providing training and education through on-site courses and classes as well as community wellness and immersive events.



Meccaversity – online platform (<https://www.mecca.com/en-au/mecca-memo/meccaversity/>)

The Meccaversity pod would be located at the rear of the first floor Mecca tenancy, to the east side of the building and would encompass approximately 15% of the first-floor tenancy.

The self-contained auditorium would function as an acoustically enclosed space and would be located below the heritage ceiling and largely retained intact.

It would cater for up to 120-150 people when seated or 200 people when standing. There would be the option to divide the area into two smaller spaces using retractable doors.

The Meccaversity would consist of a:

- Steel-framed structure with acoustic plasterboard and cork linings to walls, ceilings and floors,
- Suspended ceiling below the heritage ceiling fixed above the latter,
- Structural beam below the heritage ceiling, to support the retractable doors within the auditorium,
- Concealed ductwork above new ceiling,
- Large mechanical units housed above the western corridor ceiling,
- Feature lighting to highlight the decorative ceiling,
- LED glass screen to the north wall, framed by a custom fabricated aluminium fascia,
- Amenities block and storage area to the rear (south) of the Meccaversity.

## 5.4. Design Assessment

### Massing and Form

The proposed Meccaversity would be a contemporary design and have a cubic form that would sit below the decorative coffered ceiling.

The Meccaversity ceiling has been lowered from its initial height to 3.4 metres high (to the top of the metal fascia) to increase views to the decorative plaster ceiling. The pod would maintain a 540mm gap between the upper edge of the metal fascia and the lowest, perimeter band of the ceiling unit with an additional 550mm to the uppermost, flat part of the central ceiling panel (an overall gap of approximately 1 metre).

There would be two entries to the Meccaversity: a primary entry along the west wall and a secondary entry near the east wall with access to the lifts. Proximity to the lifts would be critical for staff to access the basement floor, storage and inventory.

### Ceilings, walls, floors

Due to the functional requirements of the Meccaversity, it would be necessary for the pod to operate as an acoustically enclosed space, separate from the adjacent treatment rooms to the west side and the retail space more generally. It is likely that microphones/speakers or similar amplification would be required within the Meccaversity while educational talks and courses are underway.

The pod would be steel-framed with various acoustic wall types and applications of acoustic wall/ceiling/floor linings (acoustic plasterboard and cork linings). Cork flooring would be installed above the Coles era mosaic flooring with a protective floor barrier in between, to prevent damage to original fabric.

The new ceiling would be suspended from fine metal rods that pass through the flat sections of the decorative ceiling. The metal rods would be fixed to existing and new structure predominantly hidden above the decorative ceiling. The proposed ceiling system would be reversible and could be easily removed at the end of the tenancy with minimal impact to heritage fabric.

A new structural steel beam would be required above the Meccaversity ceiling and below the decorative ceiling. The beam would be required to support the retractable doors within the Meccaversity and would be concealed by the metal fascia. Minor repair works would be required to the ceiling at the end of the tenancy.

The front, north wall of the Meccaversity would consist of an LED screen framed by a contemporary custom metal fascia that would be distinguishable from heritage fabric. The fascia would conceal necessary flexible ductwork above the Meccaversity ceiling.

**Mechanical**

It is noted that all substantial mechanical units previously located above the Meccaversity ceiling have been shifted from their location in the previous proposal, to the west side of the building thus minimising bulky visual clutter and providing the lowest ceiling height possible. Some ductworks would be located above the Meccaversity, however these would be concealed by the custom metal fascia.

**Feature Lighting**

LED lighting would be discretely installed to highlight the perimeter of the decorative coffered ceiling. This would be a vast improvement on the David Jones phase where an extensive number of light fittings were installed in the coffered/recessed and flat sections of the decorative ceiling.

**Storage and Amenities**

A small storage and amenities block with contemporary finishes would be built adjacent to the inter-tenancy wall. The wall incorporates a glazed upper highlight so that views to the decorative ceiling from the Mecca and Rodd & Gunn tenancies would be possible. The proposed ceiling in the storage/amenities area would be lower than the Meccaversity ceiling to respond to this detail.

**5.5 Views and Obscuring of Heritage Fabric**

Heritage Victoria have concerns regarding the proposed Meccaversity 'significantly altering the sense of the first-floor being an open space' and hiding newly restored heritage elements.

**Historic Views**

Early photographs of the first-floor cafeteria dating from circa 1940 and circa 1950 show that there were different but some obstructions and intrusions into the open cafeteria. The photos show a full height partition wall projecting into the open space and unsympathetically intersecting with the decorative ceiling above. There were also two full height subveyor 'columns' positioned in the middle of the floor (one at each end of the cafeteria) that would have partly impeded linear views across the first-floor space.

As the cafeteria evolved, low height partition walls, screens, a substantial bulkhead, signage, pendant and strip lighting were introduced, further obscuring views across the first-floor space. These elements are highly commensurate in a retail environment.

**Impact on Proposed Views**

The proposed Meccaversity would partly obscure long views to the decorative ceiling at first floor, views that would have previously been possible under the approved heritage permit P36736 (amended). However, recent on-site photographs showing the approved void and escalators from ground, mezzanine and first floor levels demonstrate that the impact of the Meccaversity on these views, would overall be minimal.

A photograph taken from the base of the new ground floor escalators shows the long views of the first-floor ceiling that would be possible, as a result of the void. The approximate height and location of the proposed Meccaversity is indicated (dotted red).

While the long view of the decorative ceiling would be slightly truncated, a substantial section of the decorative ceiling would still be visible (at least two entire panels) such that the original geometry and linearity of the ceiling could be interpreted and appreciated from ground floor.

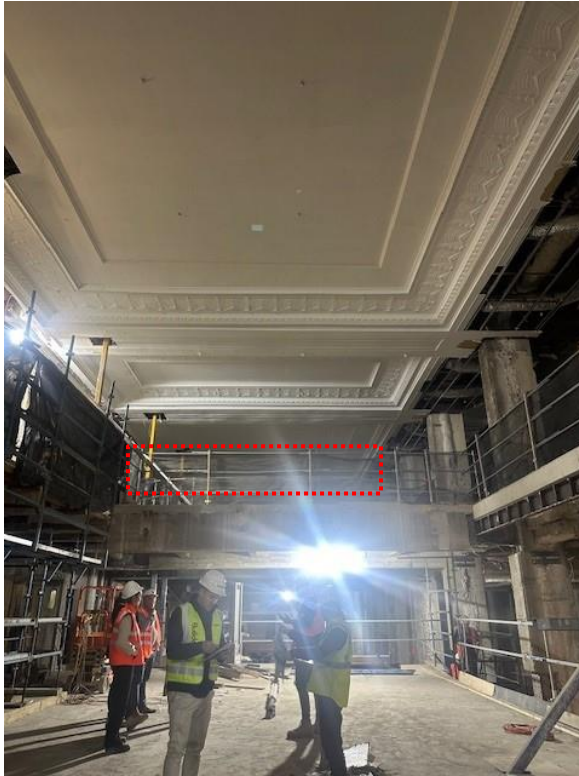


Ground floor level – new void/mezzanine and escalators (photo courtesy of MECCA)

A second photograph similarly demonstrates the long view of the first-floor ceiling that would be possible from the newly created mezzanine level. The approximate height and location of the Meccaversity is dotted red.

While a small portion of the decorative ceiling would be partly obscured, it is noted that the approved balustrade to the void would have nonetheless resulted in a similar degree of obstruction.

In addition, unobstructed views of the decorative panelled ceiling to the northern end of the ceiling would still be possible.



View from the new mezzanine level, looking south towards the proposed Meccaversity (photo courtesy of MECCA)



View from the new mezzanine level, looking north towards the Bourke Street windows (photo courtesy of MECCA)

The following photograph demonstrates the long view of the first-floor ceiling that would be possible from that level, when viewed from across the void. The approximate height and location of the Meccaversity is dotted red.

A sufficient number of decorative ceiling panels would remain visible, such that linearity and full volume of the space could still be interpreted.

It is noted that the newly created extensive views of the first-floor ceiling afforded from ground and mezzanine level, would continue to be a considerable improvement from the previous David Jones fit-out.



View from first floor level, looking south across the void towards the location of the proposed Meccaversity (photo courtesy of MECCA)

### **Tiled columns**

Heritage Victoria noted that the proposed Meccaversity would obscure original dado wall tiles to the columns in the rear south-east corner of the tenancy (along grid line H).

The previous David Jones fit-out obscured much of the original wall tiles and provided limited opportunities to appreciate with Norris' original scheme. It is noted that staff and customers outside the Meccaversity would have ample opportunities to interpret Norris' original scheme in more detailed and expansive areas of the fit-out.

Considerable conservation works to prioritise the restoration and reinstatement of original tiles along north wall are currently being carried out. This includes the reinstatement of the tiled dado and tiled architraves to the five arched windows. The north wall would be restored to a high level of intactness and would be a feature of the Mecca fit-out.

Within the Meccaversity area, there will be small alcove near the columns along grid line H where the original ceiling panel and plaster motifs/capitals to the top of the columns would be legible. This area would serve as an intact representative section of Norris' design within the Meccaversity.

### Comparative

It is not uncommon for reversible, contemporary pod-like structures to be inserted at VHR listed places.

A good heritage approach is the Castlemaine Goods Shed, Kennedy Street (VHR H1664) where a steel-framed pod with mezzanine level has been inserted at the northern end of the building with very minimal impact to the heritage place. The linear volume of the goods shed, gabled roof form and timber trusses remain legible and uninterrupted. The pod has minimal fixings and is reversible.

This accepted approach would be taken at the subject building, albeit due to the limitations of the space (a single height space with a generally flat ceiling) a lesser extent of the original ceiling would be visible.



Ground floor level – new void/mezzanine and escalators (photo courtesy of MECCA)

## 5.6 Basis for Location

The location of the proposed Meccaversity has been determined on the basis of various factors and consideration of alternative locations. The proposed location is the only practical one based on the 'Reasonable or Economic Use' report prepared by S C Lennon & Associates.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *Report on Reasonable or Economic Use for the proposed MECCaversity in the MECCA Flagship Retail Tenancy in the Former Coles and David Jones Stores (August 2024)* prepared by S C Lennon & Associates



## Functionality

The Meccaversity would be an instore education space for staff and customers and would facilitate courses and classes in beauty education. Experiential learning and the ability to observe these processes on-site are key to the success of the space. The main functions of the Meccaversity have been reproduced from the S C Lennon report:<sup>17</sup>

### Team Program

- MECCA team will access the space Monday-Wednesday for training, including category and brand training, leadership, specialist programs and assessments. The space will be used for workshops, strategy meetings and team days.
- MECCAversity will act as a hub to train MECCA's makeup specialist cohort, the key to supporting MECCA's largest category and service offer. There is currently no fit-for-purpose makeup training facility within the MECCA network.
- MECCAversity will unlock MECCA's ability to provide wellness classes to store team members, with a program of breathwork to support team pre-trade.
- The space will build team connections, by hosting team meetings, movie nights and retail conferences.
- MECCAversity (MV) at Bourke Street will open career pathways in education as store hosts become certified in facilitation and education. Working in the MECCA Education team consistently remains at the top of MECCA store team's professional goals and the MV space will act as an incubator for future talent and provide tactile education experiences to build their skills sets.

### Customer Program

- MECCAversity (MV) will provide customers will the opportunity to explore five levels of learning across all beauty categories and beyond.
- MV Fundamentals: an evergreen five-part series demystifying the basic knowledge of Skin, Makeup, Fragrance and Hair – designed to welcome beauty beginners into the MECCA space and empower them to confidently explore the world of beauty.
- MV Explore: trade and campaign led classes that bring what's new and now to customers. This program will directly link to activity in the Melbourne CBD, putting Bourke Street on the cultural map (for example, Lunar New Year, Melbourne Fashion Week and Rising Festival).

While the Meccaversity would function as a large auditorium space, there is also the need for the Meccaversity to be located near adjacent treatment rooms for integrated experiences. Natural light would be critical to the success of the latter.

In addition, it would be necessary for the Meccaversity to be located near rest rooms with easy access to back-of-house facilities.

## Ground Floor

The ground floor level is premium retail floor space for Mecca and locating the Meccaversity at this level from an economic point of view is not viable. The business economics of the space is discussed in the S C Lennon Report:

Meccaversity cannot be located on the ground floor, which is the epicentre of the flagship store's retail offering (see 'Business Economics' above). This is reflected in the significant rent per annum being charged. It is the prime retail space and use for the MECCAversity (which is essentially a 'loss leader') would be infeasible.<sup>18</sup>

Locating the Meccaversity and inter-related treatment rooms at ground floor (where natural light would be possible), would also have a potential impact on pedestrian circulation routes along Union Lane and in the adjacent development.

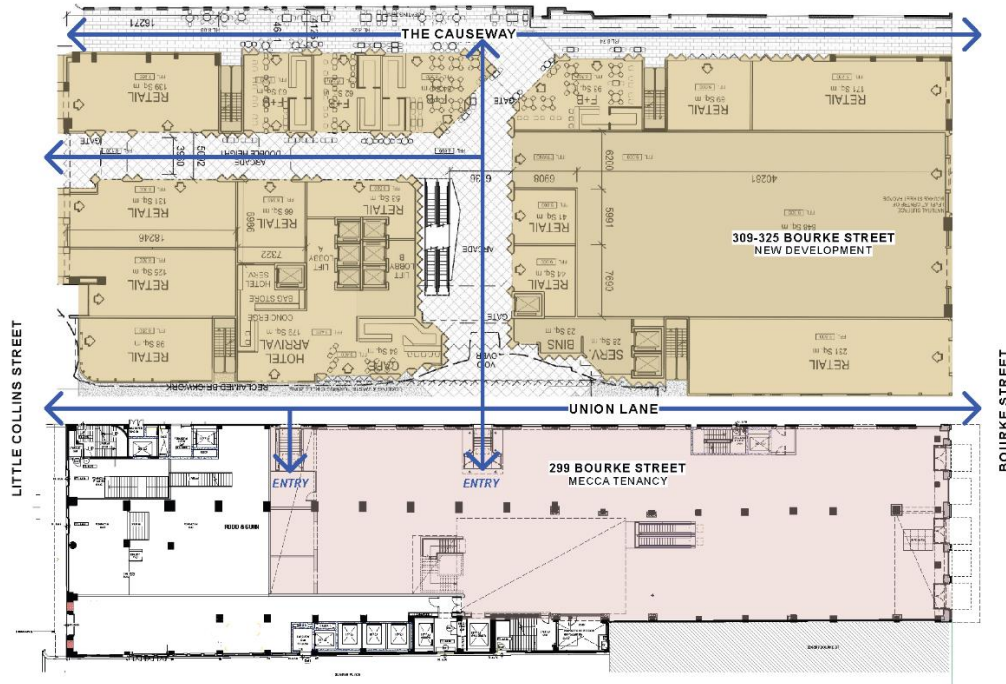
Improving the city's lane network in a 'class 3 lane' such as Union Lane, is a key objective of Clause 15.01-1L (CBD Lanes) of the *Melbourne Planning Scheme*. It is understood that the creation of the shop entrances and display windows to the Union Lane elevation were endorsed under the Mecca permit, partly for the role they would play in 'encouraging the creation of new lanes and connections.'

<sup>17</sup> Reproduced from *Report on Reasonable or Economic Use for the proposed MECCAversity in the MECCA Flagship Retail Tenancy in the Former Coles and David Jones Stores (August 2024)* prepared by S C Lennon & Associates

<sup>18</sup> Report on Reasonable or Economic Use for the proposed MECCAversity in the MECCA Flagship Retail Tenancy in the Former Coles and David Jones Stores (August 2024) prepared by S C Lennon & Associates, p24

The endorsed diagram shows the two entries to the Union Lane elevation are part of an integrated pedestrian network that would be critical to bringing customers into the Mecca flagship store. The central entry specifically, has been strategically aligned with the east-west path of the adjacent development at 309-325 Bourke Street.

Locating the Meccaversity and associated treatment rooms near Union Lane where natural light is afforded, would likely have an impact on this newly established pedestrian network.



Endorsed circulatory routes between the subject site, Union Lane and adjacent development at 309-325 Bourke Street. (Source: Endorsed drawings prepared by Studio McQualter (P36736).

### Lower ground floor

As mentioned above, the on-site teaching and integrated experiences offered through the Meccaversity would rely on the auditorium being located near the treatment rooms which have natural light. This is not possible at lower ground floor.

The Mecca tenancy would encompass only the northern half of the lower ground floor and is proposed to become a back of house area with dedicated staff facilities such as breakout spaces, meeting rooms, open workspaces, beauty counters, amenities and an inventory area to support the Mecca Flagship Store.<sup>19</sup>

Providing a dedicated back of house area for Mecca employees is part of the company's commitment to looking after its staff, much like G J Coles business model for the Coles Flagship Store. It is understood that locating the Meccaversity at lower ground floor would result in a dedicated staff area being eliminated altogether.

## 5.7 Conclusion

The proposed Meccaversity would be part of an evolving retail trend offering experiential and educational retail services that extend beyond the traditional offerings of an on-site retail store. As retail leaders in cosmetics, skincare and related products, the Meccaversity would provide the necessary facilities to expand their offerings and provide on-site training and education, facilities courses, class and community wellness and immersive events.

<sup>19</sup> A permit application for back of house staff facilities is proposed for lower ground floor. The application has been submitted and is currently being assessed by Heritage Victoria.

The Meccaversity has been designed as an acoustically enclosed self-contained 'pod' that would ultimately be reversible. The acoustics of the Meccaversity are critical to the operational functionality of the auditorium and surrounding spaces. The pod has been designed to have minimal impact on heritage fabric and to maximise views to the heritage ceiling as much as possible, while meeting these requirements.

While linear views to the decorative ceiling from ground, mezzanine and first floors would be slightly truncated, current photographs from these locations demonstrate that the Meccaversity would have minimal impact on reading the linear, open space at first floor. Furthermore, early historic photographs from the Coles era demonstrate that linear views across the first-floor cafeteria were partly obstructed by regular configuration of partitions, technology and lighting.

Locating the Meccaversity at ground floor would not be feasible. This is primarily due to the ground floor being premium retail space. There would likely be an impact on established pedestrian routes along Union Lane. Locating the Meccaversity at lower ground floor lacks natural light which is vital to the success of the Meccaversity offerings.

There would be ample opportunities to appreciate the significant heritage fabric, particularly at the north end of the former cafeteria where original fabric would be reinstated to a high level of intactness.

A successful retail store relies on its ability to adapt to evolving trends, much like G J Coles legacy at the subject building. The proposed Meccaversity embraces the educational, experiential, and immersive retail services that are required of a modern-day retail store.

*End of report*