

Heritage Impact Statement

Property Address: 318 Little Bourke Street Melbourne VIC 3000

Victorian Heritage Register Number: H0623

Heritage Overlay Number: HO687

Site Name: Former Money Order Post Office and Savings Bank

Prepared By: Bruce Henderson Architects Pty Ltd

Date: 23rd May 2024

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The former Money Order Post Office and Savings Bank was constructed in 1890 to relieve the overcrowded facilities at the nearby General Post Office. It is a six storey building designed by prominent Public Works Department architect Peter Kerr. Other notable work by Kerr included the interior work for Parliament House and additions to the General Post Office in Elizabeth Street. Kerr's son H.J. Kerr collaborated with him on the design, and the drawings bear his signature as draftsman. The former Money Order Post Office and Savings Bank was built by James H Sutherland at a cost of nearly nineteen thousand pounds. It functioned as the Money Order Office until c1917 when it was leased to various Commonwealth Government Departments, including the Federal Capital Director of Design and Construction. Between 1921 and 1932 it housed a war museum. In 1932 alterations were effected to provide offices for Federal parliamentarians. The parliamentarians moved out in 1970. The building is constructed of load-bearing brickwork, rendered to the main south facade and the west facade. The internal floors are supported by cast iron columns. The design utilised contemporary developments in fireproof construction, including encasing the iron columns in fireproof plaster. The floor system is massed concrete cast over vaulted corrugated iron forms on iron or steel joists carried by the columns. Lath and plaster ceilings are suspended beneath the iron formwork. Timber floors sit on top of the concrete. The hipped roofs are supported by a timber and wrought iron truss frame. The planning of the building is uncomplicated and "modern" in character with open-plan floors, grouped services at the rear, stairs and lifts at the front and rear and large repetitive windows along the east and west walls. The arcaded ground floor chamber is heavily embellished with plaster detail but the decorative scheme gradually reduces in detail on the upper floors. The former Money Order Post Office and Savings Bank originally incorporated a reticulated hot water heating system, a further innovation that dispensed with the need for fireplaces and chimneys. The conservative detailing of the facade is complementary to that of the nearby General Post Office which had been extended by Kerr the previous year.

How is it significant?

The former Money Order Post Office and Savings Bank is of architectural, technical, and historical significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The former Money Order Post Office and Savings Bank is architecturally significant as the last major public work in the career of Public Work's Department architect Peter Kerr. Kerr's long and distinguished association with the Department spanned 35 years. At the time of designing the former Money Order Post Office and Savings Bank Kerr was an Architect Class 1 for the Department.

The former Money Order Post Office and Savings Bank is technically significant as an innovative building of the early 1890s, incorporating the latest developments in fireproof construction, reticulated heating and goods and passenger lifts.

The former Money Order Post Office and Savings Bank is historically significant for associations with the development of postal services in Victoria. The building was constructed at the same time as alterations to the General Post Office to alleviate overcrowding and ever increasing demand. The former Money Order Post Office and Savings Bank was located close to the main building to facilitate ease of business between the two buildings.

Proposed Works

Recent Building Modifications & Works (1998 & 2000)

In 1998, the former Money Order Post Office and Savings Bank was converted into serviced apartments and renovated internally. The façade was left unaltered.

Later in 2000, an 8 storey addition (serviced apartments) was constructed to the rear of the site and connected to the original building. Also at this time, the ground floor of the existing building was converted into four retail shops with access to three of the shops from Diver Lane. New doorways and internal steps to access the higher internal ground floor level were constructed in place of three of the existing windows (for shops 2, 3 & 4) and were in keeping with the original architectural style and design. The windows to Shop 1 remained unaltered at the time. Bruce Henderson Architects Pty Ltd were the architects for both above building modification works.

Proposed Works

It is proposed to convert the one of the windows to Shop 1 along Driver Lane into a doorway with internal steps into the shop to match the three other doorways constructed in back in 2000. The design would be in keeping with the existing buildings architectural style and match the doorways and steps previously constructed.

Impact

The proposed works are minor in nature and would create a sense of symmetry to street level façade along Driver Lane. All works will be in keeping with the architectural style and be of no negative impact to the building and would enhance the façade making all doors and windows identical and create consistent interface between the shops and Driver Lane. As the original architects of the building modification works in 1998 and 2000, we have an intimate knowledge of the building and its structure and are well placed to carry out the design works and supervise the construction. All building works will be carried out with extreme care and no damage will be made to the exiting building or its surrounds. In our opinion, we believe there are no negative impacts by the proposed works.

The proposed works are outlined in the accompanying drawings prepared by Bruce Henderson Architects Pty Ltd.

Site Plan



Images



The former Money Order Post Office and Savings Bank
318 Little Bourke Street



Driver Lane Elevation



Conversions of original windows into doorways (Shops 2 & 3)



Proposed existing window (centre) to be converted into a doorway