

HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT

174 Collins Street, Melbourne
(Collins Street Baptist Church)



VHR Number: H0006

Baptist Church

HIS prepared for Sam Hill, SimBuilt Pty Ltd

25 February 2025

Cover Image: Collins Street Baptist Church, c1870.
(Source: Baptist Church, Collins St, Charles Nettleton, c1870, SLV ID H2117)

NBRS & PARTNERS Pty Ltd
Level 4 325 Flinders Lane
Melbourne
VIC 3000 Australia

Telephone +61 3 9118 000
Email architects@nbrs.com.au

ABN: 16 002 247 565

Nominated Architects
Andrew Duffin: NSW Reg No. 5602

This document remains the property of NBRS & PARTNERS Pty Ltd.
The document may only be used for the purposes for which it was produced.
Unauthorised use of the document in any form whatsoever is prohibited.

ISSUED	REVIEW	ISSUED BY
19 February 2024	Review	Rose Mickan
19 February 2025	Draft for Client Review	Elizabeth Offer
25 February 2025	Final	Elizabeth Offer

CONTENTS

1.0	INTRODUCTION	1
1.1	Background	1
1.2	Methodology	1
1.3	Pre-Application Advice	1
1.4	Site Location	2
1.5	Authorship	5
1.6	Limitations.....	5
1.7	Copyright	5
2.0	DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE	6
2.1	Pre-Contact History	6
2.2	Summary History of Melbourne.....	6
2.3	Summary History of the Collins Street Baptist Church	7
3.0	PHYSICAL EVIDENCE	14
3.1	Site Context.....	14
3.2	Site Description	15
3.2.1	Baptist Church.....	16
3.2.2	Central House.....	21
4.0	ESTABLISHED HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE	22
4.1	Victorian Heritage Register and Heritage Inventory	22
4.2	Melbourne Planning Scheme.....	22
4.3	National Trust.....	23
4.4	Significance of the Subject Site	23
5.0	THE PROPOSAL	25
5.1	Documentation Evaluated.....	26
6.0	ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE IMPACT	27
6.1	Introduction.....	27
6.2	Evaluation Against Heritage Victoria Guidelines	27
6.2.1	Reasons for the Activity.....	27
6.2.2	The extent to which the cultural heritage significance of the place or object is affected by the proposal [s 101(2)(a)].	28
6.2.3	the extent to which the application, if refused, would affect the reasonable or economic use of the registered place or registered object [s 101(2)(B)]......	29
6.2.4	the extent to which the application, if approved, would affect the cultural heritage significance of any adjacent or neighbouring property.....	30
6.2.5	Options Considered	31
6.2.6	Management and mitigation measures	32
6.2.7	Reasons why the proposed works should be supported.	33
6.3	Principles for Considering Change to Places in the Victorian Heritage Register	33
6.4	Heritage Victoria Pre-Application Advice.....	35

6.4.1	Minimum Required Works to Achieve DDA Access	35
6.4.2	Relationship Between Proposed Walkway and Lift.....	35
6.4.3	Impact on Setting and Views In Collins Street	36
6.4.4	Why is the Chosen Location Proposed.....	37
7.0	CONCLUSION	38

LIST OF FIGURES

<i>Figure 1: Aerial of Collins Street, Melbourne, with the subject site dashed red. (Source: Nearmaps with NBRS overlay)</i>	3
<i>Figure 2: Aerial of the subject site (dashed yellow), with the area of the proposed work outlined in red. (Source: Nearmaps with NBRS overlay)</i>	3
<i>Figure 3: Image of the subject site, with the area of the proposed work circled red.</i>	4
<i>Figure 4: Mapping showing the properties listed on the Victorian Heritage Register (shaded orange) with the subject site dashed red. (Source: Vicplan with NBRS overlay)</i>	4
<i>Figure 5: Victorian Heritage Register extent of registration plan for H0006 – Baptist Church, including the Baptist church (B-1) and Central House (B-2) and all the land marked L-1. The area of proposed works has been dashed red. (Source: Victorian Heritage Database with NBRS overlay)</i>	4
<i>Figure 6: Circa 1870 photograph of the Baptist church in Collins Street. Note the sloping ground on either side of the stairs (dashed red), behind the low walls, that are planted with shrubs. A staircase is visible behind the gate to the area right of the stairs (indicated by arrow). (Source: SLV ID H2117)</i>	8
<i>Figure 7: Circa 1900 photograph of the Baptist church in Collins Street. (Source: SLV ID H33608)</i>	8
<i>Figure 8 (above): Close detail of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works Plan showing the front entrance to the Baptist Church on Collins Street. (Source: SLV ID 9911617753607636)</i>	9
<i>Figure 9 (left): Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works Plan showing the Baptist Church on Collins Street. (Source: SLV ID 9911617753607636)</i>	9
<i>Figure 10: Late 1940s photograph of the Baptist church on Collins Street, with Central House constructed to the left of the image. (Source: SLV ID H2010.73/25)</i>	10
<i>Figure 11: Close-up of late 1940s photograph of the Baptist church, showing the southeast corner of the Collins Street frontage (Source: SLV ID H2010.73/25)</i>	10
<i>Figure 12: 1981 drawing of the Baptist Church showing the frontage facing Collins Street (Source: SLV ID H2010.73/25)</i>	11
<i>Figure 13: 1981 drawing of the Collins Street Baptist Church showing the east elevation of the Collins Street frontage (Source: SLV ID H82.190 153)</i>	11
<i>Figure 14: 1984 photograph showing the southeast corner of the frontage to Collins Street. The bluestone stairs leading from the Collins Street level to the topmost platform are visible (indicated by arrow). (Source: Provided by Client)</i>	12
<i>Figure 15: 2009 image of the Baptist Church on Collins Street before the works were undertaken to the southeasternmost portion of the site. (Source: Google Street View 2009)</i>	13
<i>Figure 16: 2013 image of the Baptist Church on Collins Street after the works were undertaken. (Source: Google Street View 2013)</i>	13

Figure 17: Image of the subject place (at centre and indicated by red arrow) showing the north side of Collins Street, facing north.....	14
Figure 18: Image of the subject place (at centre and indicated by red arrow) showing the north side of Collins Street, facing northeast.....	15
Figure 19: Image of the subject place (at centre and indicated by red arrow) showing the north side of Collins Street, facing northeast.....	15
Figure 20: Aerial image of the Collins Street Baptist Church, showing the roof form. The Baptist Church has been dashed red and Central House (nine-storey building) is outlined in yellow. (Source: Nearmaps with NBRS overlay).....	16
Figure 21: Image of the Collins Street Baptist Church, as viewed from Collins Street, facing north.....	17
Figure 22: Image of the Collins Street Baptist Church taken from Collins Street, facing north.....	17
Figure 23: Image of the area to the southeastern corner of the Collins Street frontage, behind the low wall, facing east. The platform lift is visible to the right of the image.	18
Figure 24: Image of the area to the southeastern corner of the Collins Street frontage, behind the low wall, facing west. The smaller of the bluestone stairs was introduced in 2010.	19
Figure 25: Image of the area to the southeastern corner showing the bluestone stairs leading from the lowest concrete landing to the topmost platform. The platform lift is visible to the right.	19
Figure 26: Image of the area to the southeastern corner showing the concrete stairs leading from the middle platform to the topmost platform.	19
Figure 27: Image of the area to the southeastern corner showing the concrete stairs from the topmost platform to the breezeway.	20
Figure 28: Image of the breezeway.	20
Figure 29: Image of Baptist Place, which provides rear access to the Baptist Church.....	20
Figure 30: Image of Central House on Collins Street, now Rutherford Pearls.	21
Figure 31: Mapping showing the properties listed on the Victorian Heritage Inventory (shaded blue) with the subject place dashed red. (Source: Vicplan with NBRS overlay).....	22
Figure 32: Mapping showing the properties listed under a Heritage Overlay in the Melbourne Planning Scheme (shaded purple) with the subject place dashed red. (Source: Vicplan with NBRS overlay).....	23
Figure 33: The fabric shaded blue was introduced to this area in 2010. The smaller of the bluestone stairs shaded green was introduced at this time and constructed from new and remodelled existing bluestone, possibly from the porch. The bluestone stairs shaded yellow were considerably modified in 2010 when new bluestone raisers were created from the former bluestone steps; new bluestone was also introduced.	26

HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT FOR COLLINS STREET BAPTIST CHURCH

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

This Heritage Impact Statement has been prepared in accordance with the standard Heritage Victoria guidelines to accompany a permit application for the partial demolition, alteration, and installation of an open platform lift to the Collins Street frontage of the Collins Street Baptist Church.

The proposed works are limited to the southeast corner of the Collins Street frontage. The proposed works are summarised as:

- Partial demolition of existing steps, concrete platform, and platform lift;
- Relocation of existing handrail and fire hose reel;
- Construction of an open top lift and timber decking with stairs;
- Reconstruction of stairs, reusing all salvageable bluestone fabric.

Details of the proposed works is located in Section 5.0.

The works are intended to improve DDA access to the subject place for users. Members attending the regular Baptist services held on-site have experienced access issues, which has resulted in some members not attending. External organisations who have or were interested in hiring the site have also expressed concerns about accessibility issues for people with low mobility, resulting in cancelled bookings.

Details of the proposed works are included in the following attachments:

- Venko, 'Collins Street Baptist Church Front Entry Works', 04.02.2025

1.2 METHODOLOGY

NBRS were engaged by SimBuilt on behalf of the Collins Street Baptist Church in April 2024 to provide guidance after pre-application advice was sought from Heritage Victoria.

This Heritage Impact Statement has been prepared in accordance with the guidelines set out in the *Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance*, 2013, known as The Burra Charter, and the Heritage Victoria publication, *Heritage Victoria Guidelines for preparing heritage impact statements* (2021).

1.3 PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE

The client has sought pre-application advice in relation to the proposed works (pre-application meeting number P38323). Heritage Victoria undertook a site visit in relation to this pre-application advice on 24 May 2023.

Heritage Victoria were presented with three different options for the installation of the lift. 'Option 1' included the installation of one lift with a deck, whilst 'Option 2' and 'Option 3' incorporated the installation of two lifts. 'Option 1', which is an earlier version of the current

proposal with a closed lift, was in principle the preferred proposed plan as indicated by Heritage Victoria.

Heritage Victoria provided further pre-application advice via a letter dated 24 May 2023 that included the following comments:

- *Heritage Victoria understand the need for improved DDA access to the Baptist Church.*
- *The front elevation of the Baptist Church is considered integral to the cultural heritage significance of the Place.*
- *The proposed works would require approval through a permit from Heritage Victoria. I have attached information regarding this process below.*
- *Any application should include a robust reasonable use and/or economic use rationale (see policy guidelines below).*
- *Any proposed works should carefully consider the setting of the Place and views from Collins Street (in front of the heritage Place), as in addition to the broader view/s from and to the streetscape.*
- *Any proposed works should be the minimum required to achieve DDA access and should consider the performance solution (performance based assessment) for this location.*
- *We would like to understand further why the lift needs to be in the proposed location.*
- *The resting position of any proposed lift should be on the ground, rather than elevated.*
- *We would like to understand the implications of an open lift, that is without a roof.*
- *We would like to understand the relationship between the proposed walkway and the proposed lift and whether all options have been considered in regard to these works.*
- *We would like to understand all options that have been or can be considered in regard to the proposed works. Any application should demonstrate that the preferred solution is the least impactful approach to the proposed works*

Heritage Victoria also indicated to the client that assistance in the preparation of a Heritage Impact Statement should be sought.

1.4 SITE LOCATION

The subject site is located at 174 Collins Street, Melbourne (Plan LP147486/Lot 1), on the northern side of Collins Street between Swanston Street to the west and Russell Street to the east. The subject site consists of three buildings, including the multi-level church to the central part of the lot, an eight-floor building with a basement to the rear of the church, and a single-storey shop to Collins Street.

The extent of the Victorian Heritage Register for the subject site overall aligns with the subject parcel.

The proposed works are limited to the ground floor and first level of the southeasternmost corner of the Collins Street frontage.

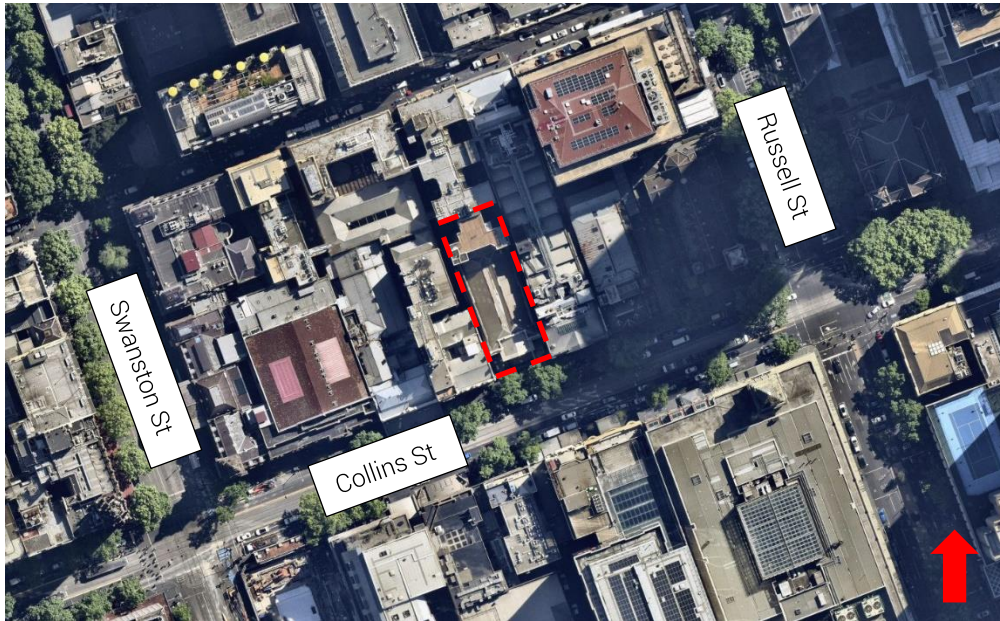


Figure 1: Aerial of Collins Street, Melbourne, with the subject site dashed red. (Source: Nearmaps with NBRS overlay)

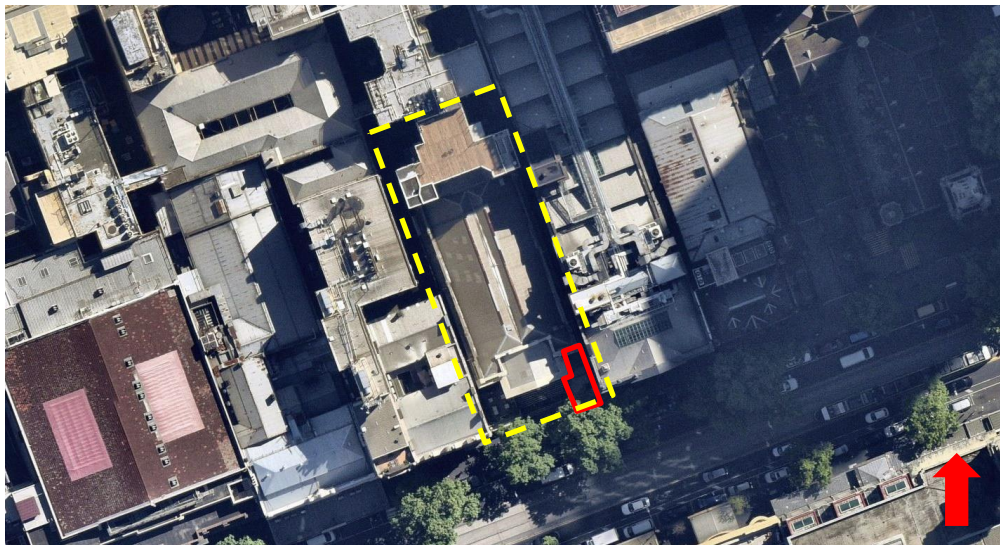


Figure 2: Aerial of the subject site (dashed yellow), with the area of the proposed work outlined in red. (Source: Nearmaps with NBRS overlay)



Figure 3: Image of the subject site, with the area of the proposed work circled red.

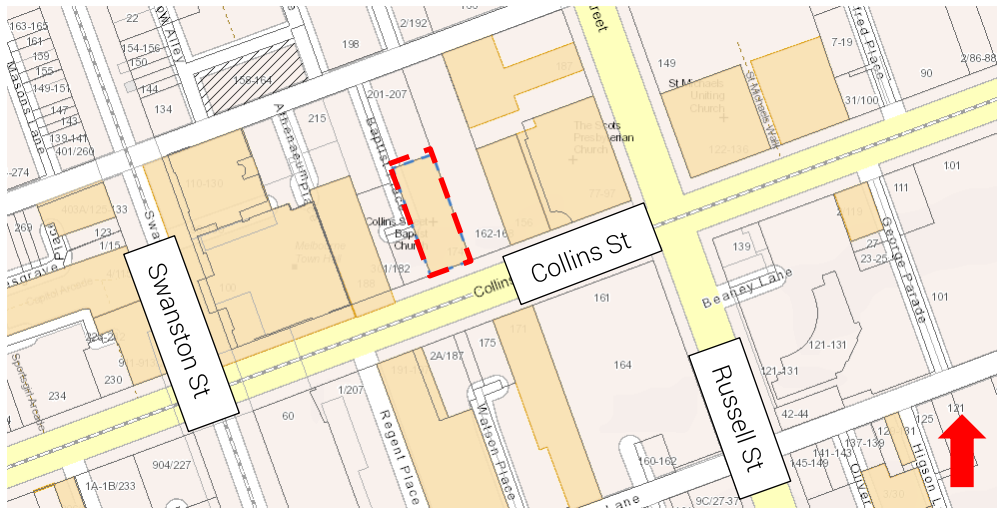


Figure 4: Mapping showing the properties listed on the Victorian Heritage Register (shaded orange) with the subject site dashed red. (Source: Vicplan with NBRS overlay)

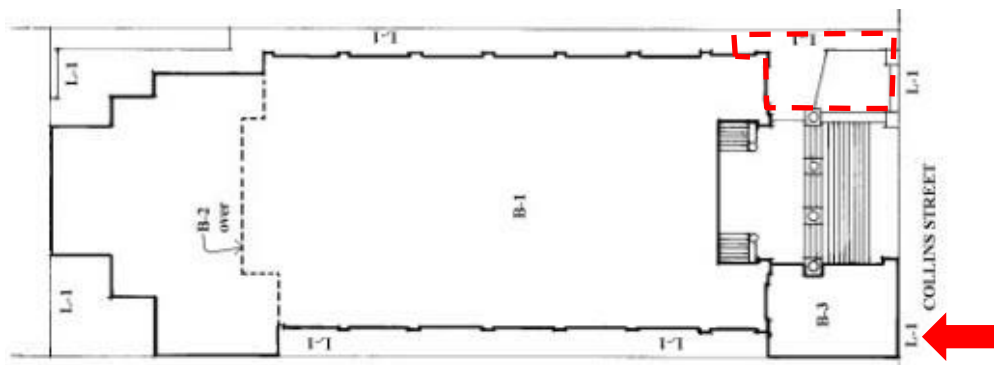


Figure 5: Victorian Heritage Register extent of registration plan for H0006 – Baptist Church, including the Baptist church (B-1) and Central House (B-2) and all the land marked L-1. The area of proposed works has been dashed red. (Source: Victorian Heritage Database with NBRS overlay)

1.5 AUTHORSHIP

This report was prepared by Dr Elizabeth Offer, Heritage Consultant, and reviewed by Rose Mickan, Senior Heritage Consultant – Heritage, both of **NBRS**.

1.6 LIMITATIONS

This report is limited to the assessment of potential impacts on the post-contact cultural heritage values of the site and does not include Aboriginal and Archaeological assessment. This report only addresses the relevant planning provisions that relate to heritage.

1.7 COPYRIGHT

Copyright of this report remains with the author, **NBRS**. Unless otherwise noted, all images are by the author.

2.0 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

2.1 PRE-CONTACT HISTORY

The land now encompassing what is known as Melbourne is the Traditional Lands of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation, who have lived on and cared for Country for thousands of generations.

The Traditional Lands of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung incorporate the land and waterways that stretch from the around the Wombat State Forest in the west to the Yarra Ranges in the east, and encompassing the northern suburbs of Melbourne. Depending on the season, the Wurundjeri traversed this area, which was rich in resources. In the warmer months, groups tended to settle closer to the Yarra River and camped along its banks. The Yarra provided an abundance of resources, including timber, water, and food. During the colder seasons, groups tended to move further inland into the hills.

Melbourne was an important meeting place for several First Nations groups. Gatherings could be large, with up to 800 people in attendance, and were significant opportunities to conduct ceremonies, form alliances, arrange marriages, trade goods, and meet kinship obligations.¹

2.2 SUMMARY HISTORY OF MELBOURNE

While surveyor Charles Grimes was sent from New South Wales to investigate the area that would become Melbourne in 1803, little interest was shown in establishing a colony at Melbourne at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Over the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Wurundjeri and Bunurong / Boon Wurrung had intermittent contact with European colonisers and sealers, which increased following John Batman's attempt at a treaty.

In 1835, John Batman, backed by the Port Phillip Association, arrived in Port Phillip (now Melbourne) to establish a treaty with the leaders of the First Nations groups. Batman's treaty included purchasing over 600,000 acres of land in Melbourne and Geelong.² Soon afterwards, colonisers began to arrive, establishing a small settlement.

The Port Phillip district was declared part of the Colony of New South Wales in 1837, opening the way for greater European settlement in and around Melbourne as pastoralists took up huge parcels to run sheep and cattle.³ While Wurundjeri and Bunurong / Boon Wurrung sought to defend their land, the growing number of settlers disrupted traditional ways of life and prohibited access to resources and land.⁴ In 1837, Robert Hoddle prepared and planned the street layout of Melbourne, establishing the major streets and laneways including Collins Street.

Most of the settlers who arrived before the 1850s were unassisted and were generally from the United Kingdom. A smaller group were assisted by the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, generally to act as domestic servants or agricultural labourers. As European settlers began to arrive in more considerable numbers, the settlement at Melbourne grew with places of worship and industries established. Early church meetings tended to be held in make-do premises before purpose-built churches were constructed.⁵

¹ Shaun Canning and Frances Thiele, 'Indigenous Cultural Heritage and History within the Metropolitan Melbourne Investigation Area' (Victorian Environmental Assessment Council, 2010), 4.

² Canning and Thiele, 12.

³ Giordano Nanni and Andrea James, *Coranderrk: We Will Show the Country* (Aboriginal Studies Press, 2013), 6.

⁴ Nanni and James, 6.

⁵ Context Pty Ltd, 'Thematic History - A History of the City of Melbourne's Urban Environment', 2011, 77, <https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/sitecollectiondocuments/history-city-of-melbourne-urban-environment.pdf>.

In 1851, gold was discovered in the colony of Victoria, which had only recently separated from New South Wales. The discovery of gold transformed Melbourne as migrants rushed to the colony, leading to important civic and commercial changes. The sudden rise in the population coupled with the wealth generated by the gold rush also spurred religious and social growth, leading to the construction of bigger, and often more elaborate, churches.⁶

Early in its history, Collins Street emerged as a prestigious residential area, with the Melbourne Club re-establishing itself there around 1857. By the 1860s, medical professionals and practices began to assemble in the area. The tree plantations were arranged in the French boulevard manner along Collins Street, for which it became well-known as the 'Paris end' of Melbourne, in 1875.

The boom years of the 1880s, stimulated by land speculation, were followed by an economic depression in the early 1890s, which slowed growth. By the turn of the twentieth century, Collins Street had firmly established itself as the professional and artistic centre of Melbourne.

Over the late 1920s, economic growth slowed with unemployment rates rising in Melbourne, as it did for much of Victoria.⁷ An economic depression followed over the early 1930s, with Melbourne suffering more than the rest of Victoria.⁸ During the 1950s and 1960s, Collins Street was subject to redevelopment, losing many of its historic buildings.

2.3 SUMMARY HISTORY OF THE COLLINS STREET BAPTIST CHURCH

The Collins Street Baptist Church, located at 174 Collins Street, Melbourne, was completed in 1862. The architect who designed the building was Joseph Reed and the contractor was John Holton.⁹

In 1839, the first Baptist service occurred in Melbourne in a borrowed tent, which was located in Collins Street on land acquired by Thomas Napier.¹⁰ Later, in the early 1840s, moves were made to establish a Baptist church with the assistance of Rev. John Ham, who had arrived from England and was on his way to Sydney. The first Baptist chapel was built in 1845 on Collins Street and later enlarged in 1859.¹¹ Other Baptist churches soon followed as theological differences resulted in communal splits.¹²

In 1861-2, the Baptist chapel was replaced with a much larger and more elaborate church building. The Baptist church was designed by notable colonial architect Joseph Reed with John Holton as contractor. The new church was described by a contemporary newspaper as the 'largest and most elegant ecclesiastical edifice in the Australian colonies,' being in the Corinthian style with seating for over 1,000 persons.¹³ The minister of the Baptist church at the time was Rev James Taylor.

Soon after its construction, the entry to the new Baptist church was described as 'approached by a flight of steps of fine axed bluestone, which extends the whole width of the portico; at the bottom are ornamental gates. The sloping ground on each side of the steps,

⁶ Context Pty Ltd, 77.

⁷ Tony Dingle, 'Depressions', *eMelbourne*, July 2008, <https://www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM00460b.htm>

⁸ Dingle, 'Depressions'

⁹ 'Re-Opening of the Collins Street Baptist Church', *Herald*, 15 January 1862, 5.

¹⁰ Philip J Hughes and Darren Cronshaw, *Baptists in Australia: A Church with a Heritage and a Future* (Christian Research Association, 2013), 23.

¹¹ Hughes and Cronshaw, 23.

¹² Hughes and Cronshaw, 23.

¹³ 'Re-Opening of the Collins Street Baptist Church', 5.

which is to be planted with evergreen shrubs, is protected from the street by dwarf walls architecturally treated.¹⁴

By the late 1870s, a large two-storey lecture hall was built to the rear of the church, facing Little Collins Street, with four commodious classrooms for use by the Baptist Sunday school.¹⁵ The hall was designed by architect A Twentymen and built by Thomas Cochrane and Co.¹⁶

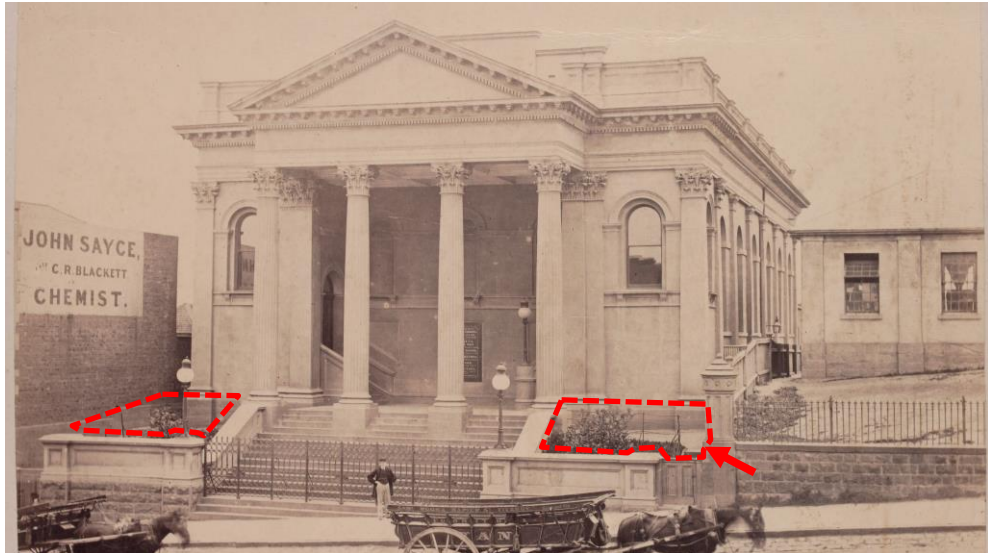


Figure 6: Circa 1870 photograph of the Baptist church in Collins Street. Note the sloping ground on either side of the stairs (dashed red), behind the low walls, that are planted with shrubs. A staircase is visible behind the gate to the area right of the stairs (indicated by arrow). (Source: SLV ID H2117)



Figure 7: Circa 1900 photograph of the Baptist church in Collins Street. (Source: SLV ID H33608)

¹⁴ 'Re-Opening of the Collins Street Baptist Church', 5.

¹⁵ 'Collins-Street Baptist Church', *Argus*, 17 December 1879, 7

¹⁶ *Ibid*

A Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works Plan from 1895 shows the early layout of the front of the Baptist church with steps to the side elevations leading up from Collins Street.

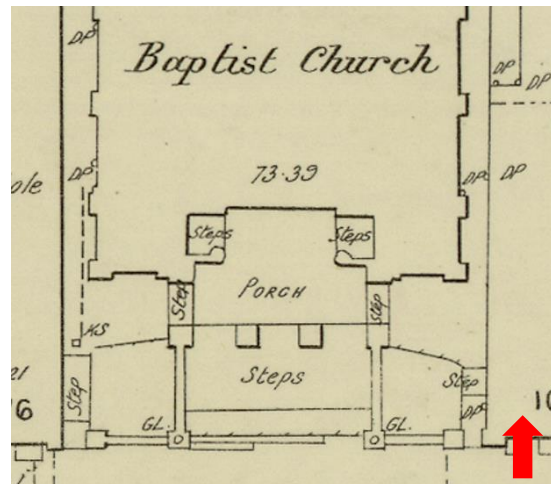
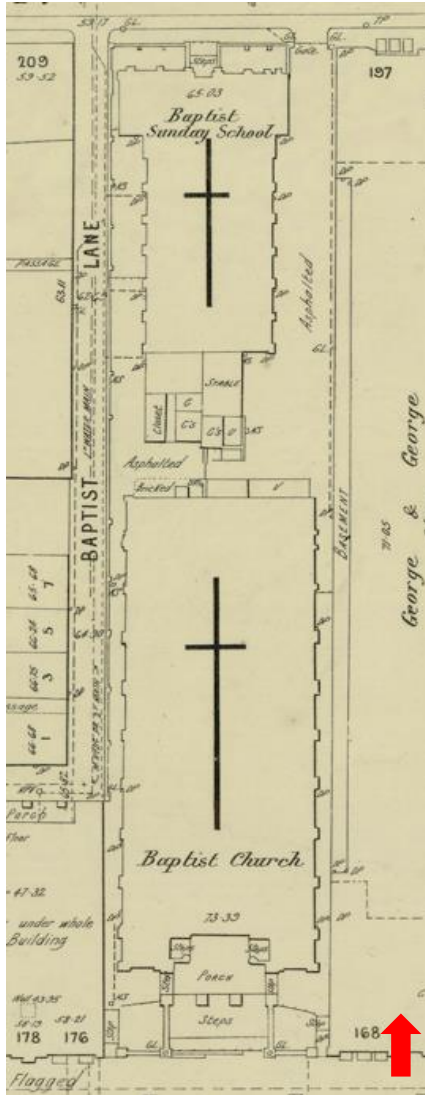


Figure 8 (above): Close detail of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works Plan showing the front entrance to the Baptist Church on Collins Street. (Source: SLV ID 9911617753607636)

Figure 9 (left): Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works Plan showing the Baptist Church on Collins Street. (Source: SLV ID 9911617753607636)

In the late 1920s, the Baptist Church embarked on an extensive building program at the site in an attempt to raise revenue. To the rear (north) of the church, fronting Little Collins Street, another hall was built (likely replacing the earlier hall) and opened in October 1928. The land was leased for 65 years to the Victoria Palace, who paid for the construction of the building and placed the ground and mezzanine floors at the disposal of the Baptist church; the building later became part of the Victoria Hotel.¹⁷

At a similar time, work began on the construction of Central House, which comprised nine floors (including a basement) in reinforced concrete and was designed by architects Gawler and Drummond, located to the rear of the church. Central House opened on 19 March 1929 and was intended to provide accommodation for institutional activities as well as a church

¹⁷ 'Baptist Church Hall Opening Ceremony This Evening', *Argus*, 4 October 1928, 10; 'Real Property and Architecture', *Herald*, 7 March 1928, 15.

hall and four levels for missionary and allied church movements.¹⁸ Around 1929, the majority of the windows, except for the four coloured glass windows located at the Collins Street end, were replaced with new glazing featuring the letters CSBC.

In 1929, a single-storey shop was constructed. The addition, built in front of the Church on its Collins Street frontage, was criticised as ‘disfigur[ing] Collins Street’.¹⁹ It was likely at this time concrete and a metal balustrade were possibly introduced to the area in the southeast corner, appearing in images from the 1940s.



Figure 10: Late 1940s photograph of the Baptist church on Collins Street, with Central House constructed to the left of the image. (Source: SLV ID H2010.73/25)



Figure 11: Close-up of late 1940s photograph of the Baptist church, showing the southeast corner of the Collins Street frontage (Source: SLV ID H2010.73/25)

¹⁸ 'Baptist Forward Movement New Church House Opened', *Age*, 21 March 1929, 11.

¹⁹ 'Disfiguring Collins Street', *Herald*, 14 May 1929, 6; 'Shop in Front of Collins Street Church Criticism Answered', *Herald*, 15 May 1929, 8.

Plans drawn of the Collins Street Baptist Church in the early 1980s show the configuration of the southeast corner of the Collins Street frontage at that time with stairs or platforms behind the low wall and a narrower staircase adjoining. By this time, the metal balustrade had been replaced with another metal handrail and balustrade.

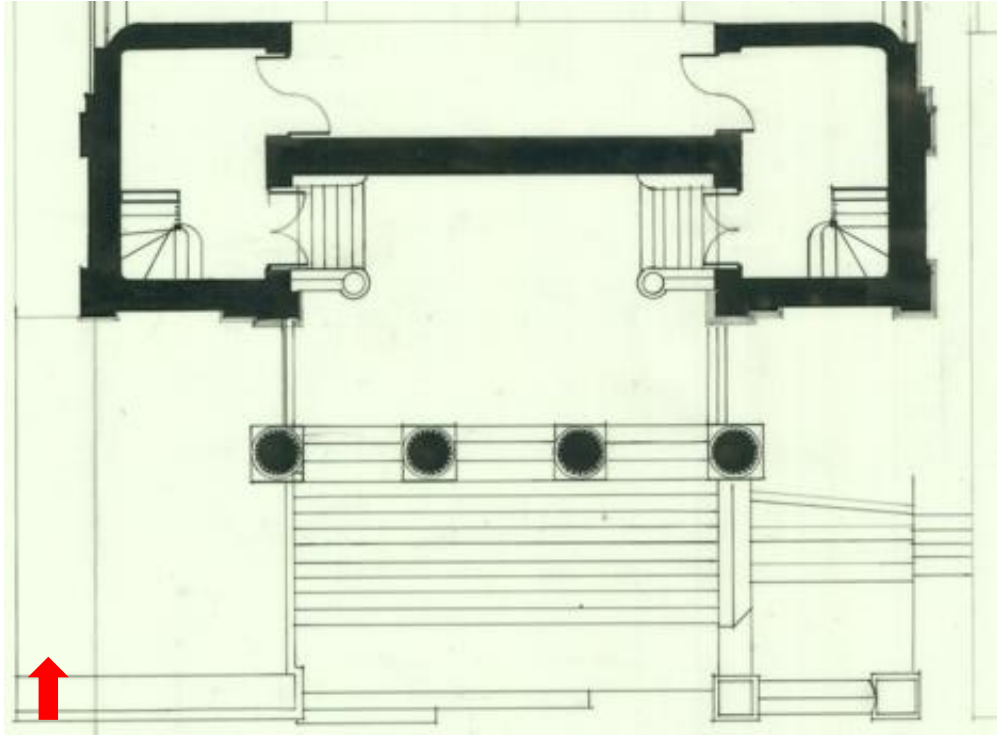


Figure 12: 1981 drawing of the Baptist Church showing the frontage facing Collins Street (Source: SLV ID H2010.73/25)

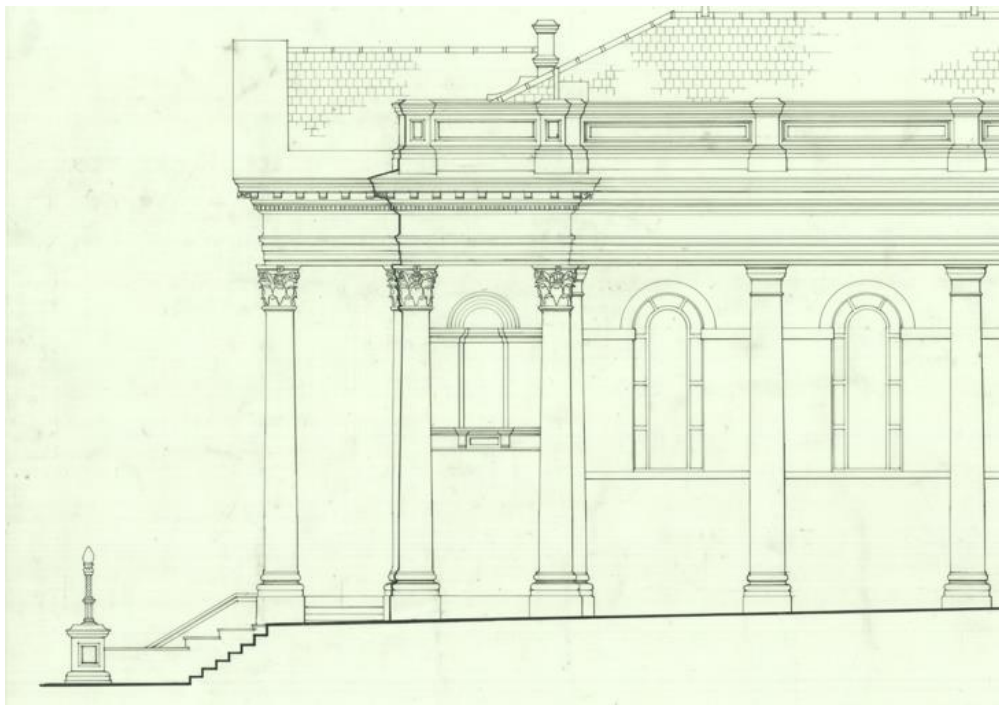


Figure 13: 1981 drawing of the Collins Street Baptist Church showing the east elevation of the Collins Street frontage (Source: SLV ID H82.190 153)



Figure 14: 1984 photograph showing the southeast corner of the frontage to Collins Street. The bluestone stairs leading from the Collins Street level to the topmost platform are visible (indicated by arrow). (Source: Provided by Client)

In 2010, works were undertaken on the stairs located to the southeastern portion of the site, behind the low wall, to allow for the introduction of a platform lift.²⁰ Alterations occurred to the platforms with concrete added and stairs introduced. These works included raising the topmost platform with new concrete stairs. Bluestone steps were introduced from the lowest landing to the middle platform level while the bluestone steps leading to the porch from the top platform were removed. A timber deck walkway along the east elevation of the church was also introduced, with new concrete stairs constructed from the timber walkway to the new concrete platform. Stainless steel handrailing was installed to the platforms with a glazed balustrade to the topmost platform. Part of the moulded base to the corner pilaster was removed.

During the 2010 works, the bluestone risers to the stairs leading from the Collins Street level to the topmost platform were retained and reused in the stairs, which were enlarged as part of these works. The smaller bluestone stairs introduced in 2010 were also constructed using new and existing bluestone from the site, likely from the bluestone steps leading to the porch from the top platform that was removed. It is unclear how much of the fabric of these stairs is original and was retained during the 2010 works.

²⁰ Kenneth Edmonds & Associates, 'Proposed Alterations and Additions to Place of Worship', *Collins Street Baptist Church*, June 2010, accessed from SimBuilt.



Figure 15: 2009 image of the Baptist Church on Collins Street before the works were undertaken to the southeasternmost portion of the site. (Source: Google Street View 2009)



Figure 16: 2013 image of the Baptist Church on Collins Street after the works were undertaken. (Source: Google Street View 2013)

3.0 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

3.1 SITE CONTEXT

The Collins Street Baptist Church is situated on the north side of Collins Street between Swanston Street to the west and Russell Street to the east. The Collins Street Baptist Church is located on a long rectangular allotment with a southern frontage to Collins Street. The main entrance is from Collins Street, with rear access provided by Baptist Place.



Figure 17: Image of the subject place (at centre and indicated by red arrow) showing the north side of Collins Street, facing north

To this portion of Collins Street, nineteenth and early twentieth-century buildings predominate, leading to a fairly consistent height, scale, and appearance. Collins Street is characterised by its grand architecture and intimate scaling, forming a prominent streetscape with a distinctive character. The early association of the street with prestige has continued as high-end retail stores, restaurants, theatres, and public buildings have maintained a strong presence.

This portion of Collins Street is generally comprised of mid-rise developments with few low-scale or high-rise buildings. There are no setbacks to the buildings along this portion except for the Scots Church and the Baptist church, which have a small to medium setback.

The street is wide with a double tram lane to its centre and street parking. The paths, kerbing, and channelling are of basalt. The footpaths are wide with mature street trees and street furniture. The wide street allows for more expansive views along Collins Street.



Figure 18: Image of the subject place (at centre and indicated by red arrow) showing the north side of Collins Street, facing northeast



Figure 19: Image of the subject place (at centre and indicated by red arrow) showing the north side of Collins Street, facing northeast.

3.2 SITE DESCRIPTION

The Collins Street Baptist Church is located at 174 Collins Street, Melbourne, and consists primarily of a church built in 1862 in the Corinthian style for the Melbourne Baptist community. The church continues to be used by the Baptist community as a place of worship. The site also consists of Central House, a nine-storey building in reinforced concrete

located to the rear (north) of the church and the interwar shop built in front of the Church's façade on its Collins Street frontage.



Figure 20: Aerial image of the Collins Street Baptist Church, showing the roof form. The Baptist Church has been dashed red and Central House (nine-storey building) is outlined in yellow. (Source: Nearmaps with NBRS overlay)

3.2.1 BAPTIST CHURCH

The Baptist Church comprises a single-storey building with a double-storey volume and a basement level with a rectangular plan. It has smooth-rendered brick walls and a hipped M-profiled roof clad in corrugated metal. The roof is concealed behind a moulded parapet. There are wide eaves above decorative brackets and dentils, below which is a wide moulded stringcourse. Beneath the stringcourse are pilasters with a moulded capital and a single arched opening with moulded lintels and a projecting sill supported by two brackets. Windows are stained leadlighting. Similar moulded pilasters and openings extend along the eastern façade of the church.



Figure 21: Image of the Collins Street Baptist Church, as viewed from Collins Street, facing north



Figure 22: Image of the Collins Street Baptist Church taken from Collins Street, facing north.

There is a centred portico beneath a projecting pediment supported by four large columns with moulded capitals and bluestone (painted) plinths. To the pediment are decorative brackets and dentils. Between the columns are bluestone stairs that lead from the street level to the topmost platform, which has been enclosed by introduced glazing; a low moulded wall extends along the eastern elevation of the stairs. Stainless steel handrails have been introduced.

Beneath the portico are several moulded stringcourses with three niches, supported by decorative brackets, and below which are recessed panels. There are also two flanking arched entrances with bluestone stairs and low moulded walls.

To the southwestern corner of the Collins Street frontage is part of the former Central House building and shop; An outdoor seating area, located above the shop roof, is enclosed by large sheets of single pane glazing and steel hand rails.

Modifications and additions have been made at the southeastern portion of the site, fronting Collins Street to improve accessibility in 2010. This area comprises two sets of stairs, multiple concrete platforms, modern balustrades and steel rails. There is a low moulded wall with a bluestone plinth and a gate. Atop the low wall is a sign and two cast iron lamp posts. The area behind this wall consists of two concrete platform areas accessed by three flights of stairs; two of the stairs are of bluestone and one is concrete. The larger of the bluestone stairs has been altered while the smaller bluestone stairs introduced in 2010. There are stainless steel handrails with a glazed balustrade to the topmost platform. The platform lift, including the railing, is extant to the eastern boundary in this portion (to the wall of 162-168 Collins Street).

The topmost concrete platform to the southeast corner provides access to a breezeway with timber decking between the Baptist Church and the building at 162 Collins Street. This breezeway is accessed by concrete stairs with a high metal gate. Side entries to the Baptist Church can be accessed from the breezeway.

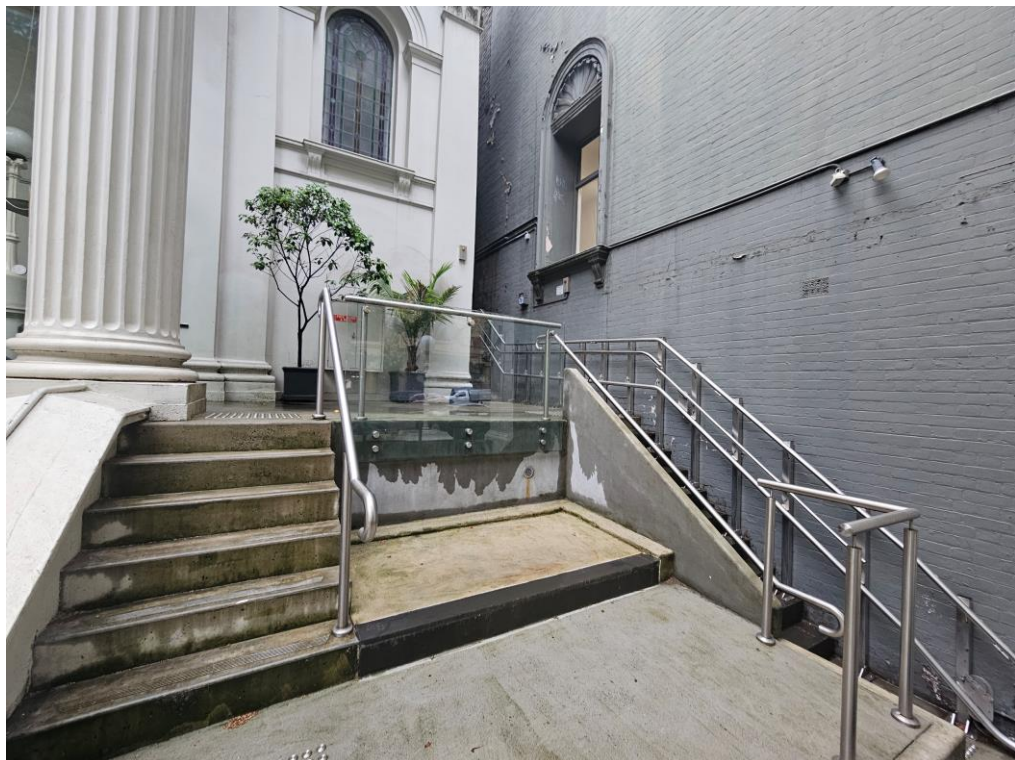


Figure 23: Image of the area to the southeastern corner of the Collins Street frontage, behind the low wall, facing east. The platform lift is visible to the right of the image.



Figure 24: Image of the area to the southeastern corner of the Collins Street frontage, behind the low wall, facing west. The smaller of the bluestone stairs was introduced in 2010.



Figure 25: Image of the area to the southeastern corner showing the bluestone stairs leading from the lowest concrete landing to the topmost platform. The platform lift is visible to the right.

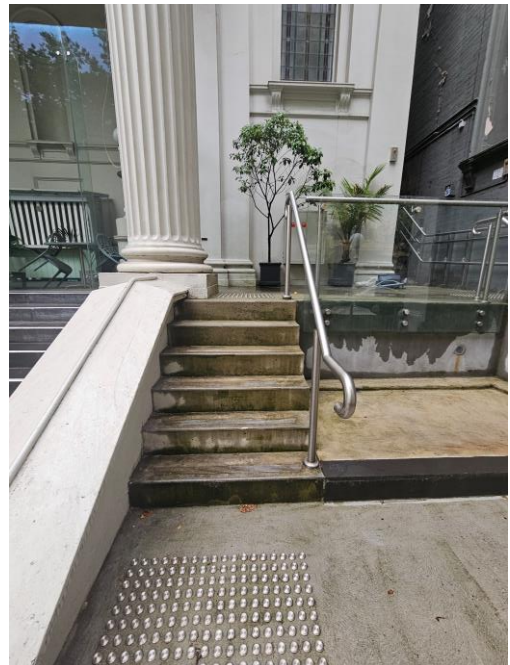


Figure 26: Image of the area to the southeastern corner showing the concrete stairs leading from the middle platform to the topmost platform.



Figure 27: Image of the area to the southeastern corner showing the concrete stairs from the topmost platform to the breezeway.



Figure 28: Image of the breezeway.

Rear access is provided to the Baptist Church from Baptist Place, which is accessed via Little Collins Street. The church is located at the end of the laneway, which measures about 50 metres.



Figure 29: Image of Baptist Place, which provides rear access to the Baptist Church.

3.2.2 CENTRAL HOUSE

The subject site also consists of Central House, which is situated at the rear (north) of the Baptist Church. Built in 1929, Central House incorporates a nine-storey building (including a basement) in reinforced concrete. The building is not visible from Collins Street.

A shopfront and access entry were built to the Collins Street frontage. The interwar shop is a rendered single-storey building with a parapet, below which is a band of decorative moulding in a floral pattern with the words 'Central House'.



Figure 30: Image of Central House on Collins Street, now Rutherford Pearls.

4.0 ESTABLISHED HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

4.1 VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER AND HERITAGE INVENTORY

The subject site is included on the Victorian Heritage Register as 'Baptist Church', 170-174 Collins Street, Melbourne, place ID H0006.

The subject site is also included in the Heritage Inventory, maintained by Heritage Victoria, as Baptist Church (H7822-1746).

Several buildings in this portion of Collins Street are included in the Victorian Heritage Register, presenting as a significant streetscape.

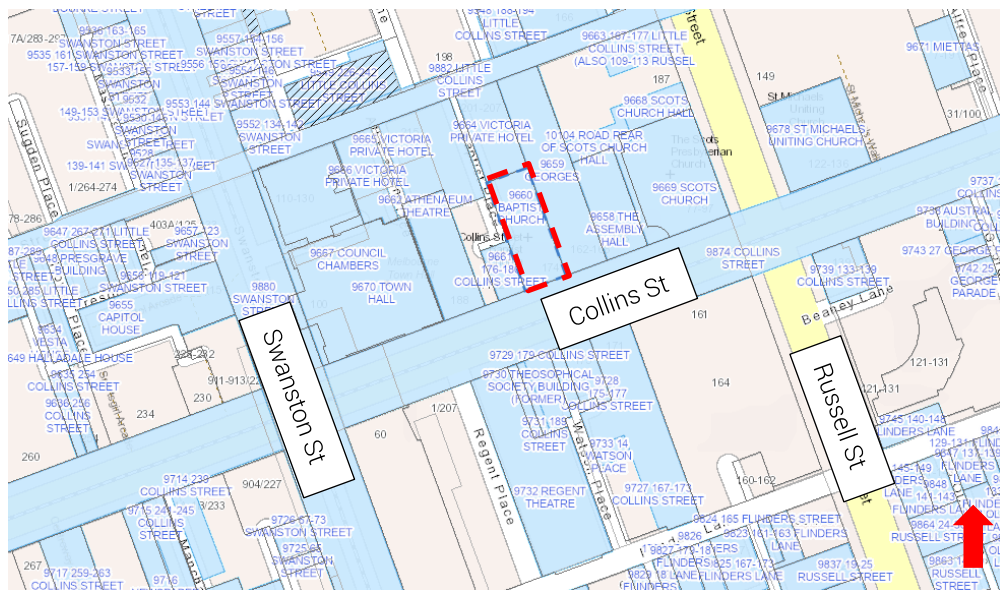


Figure 31: Mapping showing the properties listed on the Victorian Heritage Inventory (shaded blue) with the subject place dashed red. (Source: Vicplan with NBRS overlay)

4.2 MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

The subject site is included in the Melbourne Planning Scheme Schedule to the Heritage Overlay as an individual site:

- H0583 (Baptist Church) 174 Collins Street, Melbourne

The subject site is also located within the precinct-based heritage overlay:

- H0504 (Collins East Precinct).

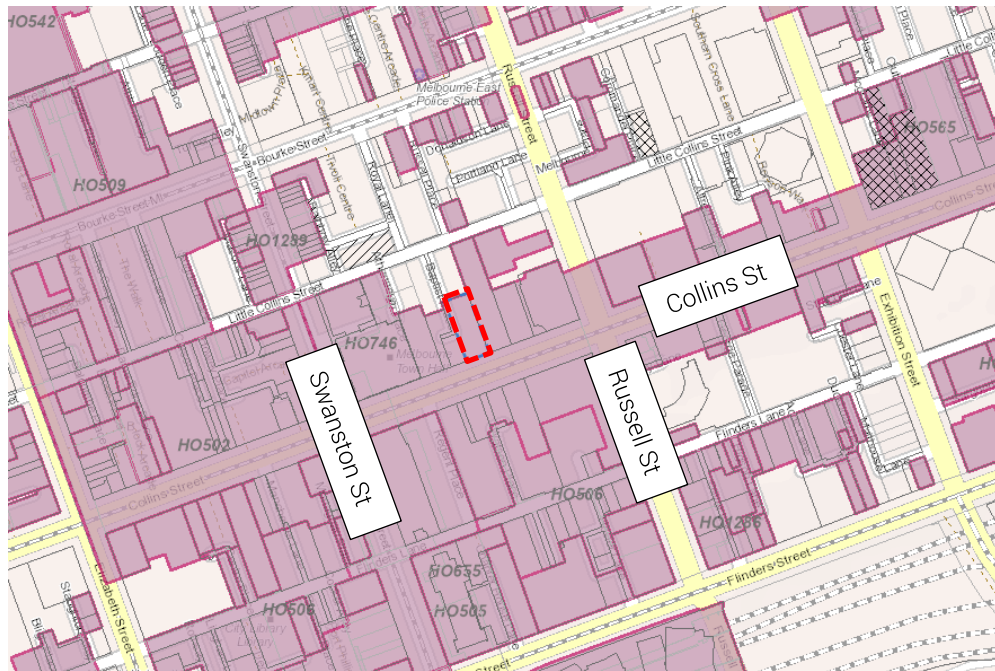


Figure 32: Mapping showing the properties listed under a Heritage Overlay in the Melbourne Planning Scheme (shaded purple) with the subject place dashed red. (Source: Vicplan with NBRS overlay)

4.3 NATIONAL TRUST

The Collins Street Baptist Church, and Central House are included on the National Trust Register as property nos B0082 and B3998 respectively.

4.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SUBJECT SITE

The subject site consists of the Baptist Church, Central House, and a small shop fronting Collins Street, included on the Victorian Heritage Register as place ID H0006. The statement of significance for the place is reproduced below (sections relevant to this application are bolded for emphasis):

What is significant?

*The first Baptist service in the colony was held in 1838 in a tent on the site where the Regent Theatre now stands. The Baptist Church obtained a grant for their present site in 1845 and work commenced soon afterwards on a brick structure with round headed windows and a simple stuccoed facade with gabled pediment. The architect was John Gill and the contractor Mr Monger. This building was enlarged in 1858. **It was replaced in 1861-62 by a chapel designed by architects Reed and Barnes to seat at least 1000 people and constructed by John Holtom.** The majority of the windows (except for four coloured glass windows at the Collins Street end of the building) were replaced about 1929 with the new windows featuring the letters CSBC. **The extent of any remnants of the 1845 structure is unknown.***

During the Depression the church embarked on a building program as a revenue producing venture which also provided jobs, as the income from Sunday giving had declined. The building to the north of the church fronting little Collins Street, Central Hall, was financed by the Victoria Palace Hall and opened in October 1928. The land was then leased from the church for the following 65 years and now forms part of the Victoria Hotel. Following the commencement of the Central Hall project, another building called Central House was designed by architects Gawler and Drummond and

opened on 19 March 1929. It comprises eight floors and a basement and was constructed adjoining the rear of the church. The church had presumed that this building would provide offices for the Baptist Union of Victoria as their administration offices but this did not eventuate. The shop fronting Collins Street was also added during this period to provide revenue. Central House has been used mainly by philanthropic groups, with two of the floors now providing accommodation for the homeless.

How is it significant?

The Baptist Church in Collins Street is of architectural and historical importance to the state of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

*The Baptist Church is of **architectural importance** as the grandest classical church in Victoria. The facade of the building is modelled on a Roman temple and is Reed's finest and purest achievement in the giant Corinthian Order. **The steps and lamp standards enhance this grandeur. The portico with its finely detailed dentils and brackets is the oldest reasonably complete surviving example on any non-residential building in the state.** The interior is a fine example of a Baptist hall church and the most intact surviving from the early 1860's. The gallery is supported on elegant cast iron columns. The Classical style of the building contrasts with the Gothic designs which were so popular at the time and this reflects the independence of the Baptist Church.*

*The Baptist Church in Collins Street is of historical importance as **the site of the earliest permanent Baptist Church building in Victoria, and for its continuing function as a Baptist Church today.** Central House is of historic importance as a reminder of the building program embarked upon by the Baptist Church during the Depression.*

5.0 THE PROPOSAL

The proposed works will be limited to the southeast corner of the Collins Street frontage (Figure 2 and 3). No other works are proposed to any other part of the Church or subject site.

The works proposed will greatly improve DDA access to the Collins Street Baptist Church by removing the current platform lift, which is difficult to operate and often unusable, and replacing it with an open-top lift. A timber walkway with stairs will be constructed between the proposed lift and the breezeway, which will allow for DDA access through the emergency exit.

The proposed lift is designed to be visually recessive. A limited material and colour palette will be used that references and complements existing materials on the site and introduces new materials that are lightweight and visually permeable.

The proposal includes the following works to this southeastern corner:

- Demolition:
 - The introduced bluestone stairs from the lowest landing to the middle platform (to be retained and re-instated in the rebuilding of these stairs);
 - The modified bluestone stairs from the lowest landing to the topmost platform;
 - Platform lift, including railing;
 - The stainless steel handrail, glazed balustrade, and the low concrete balustrade;
 - A portion of the concrete middle platform to allow for the widening (about 0.2m) of the walkway; and
- Relocation of the stainless steel handrail on the middle platform;
- Relocation of the fire hose reel;
- 'Make good' works to repair walls;
- Installation of an open-top lift;
- Construction:
 - Timber decking to create new raised platform, which will sit level with and match the existing timber decking of the breezeway;
 - Reconstructed bluestone stairs re-using material from existing stairs to provide access from lowest landing to middle platform;
 - Timber stairs to provide access from the topmost platform to the new timber deck platform;
 - Stainless steel handrails and glazed balustrade to match existing; and
 - Bluestone cladding to the exposed western face of the proposed timber deck.

The area of proposed works is limited to an area of previous alteration, dating mostly to 2010 (see below Figure 33). Most of the fabric to this area was introduced at that time. The smaller of the bluestone stairs (leading from the Collins Street level to the lower platform) was introduced in 2010 and was constructed from new and existing bluestone from the site, possibly from the porch (landing steps to this area were removed at that time). The larger bluestone staircase (leading from the Collins Street level to the topmost platform) was considerably modified in 2010, with the former stairs removed and the bluestone risers remodelled from existing and new stone. It is unclear how much of the former bluestone fabric was retained.



Figure 33: The fabric shaded blue was introduced to this area in 2010. The smaller of the bluestone stairs shaded green was introduced at this time and constructed from new and remodelled existing bluestone, possibly from the porch. The bluestone stairs shaded yellow were considerably modified in 2010 when new bluestone raisers were created from the former bluestone steps; new bluestone was also introduced.

5.1 DOCUMENTATION EVALUATED

The following documents were reviewed as part of the preparation of this report:

DOCUMENT	DRAWING NUMBER	DATE
'Existing Plan', Venko, Issue B	A020	17.12.2024
'Existing Elevation', Venko, Issue B	A030	17.12.2024
'Existing Section', Venko, Issue B	A040	17.12.2024
'Demolition Plan', Venko, Issue B	A100	17.12.2024
'Demolition Elevation', Venko, Issue B	A150	17.12.2024
'Demolition Section', Venko, Issue B	A160	17.12.2024
'Proposed Plan', Venko, Issue D	A200	04.02.2025
'Proposed Elevation', Venko, Issue D	A600	04.02.2025
'Proposed Section', Venko, Issue D	A700	04.02.2025
'3D View – Existing', Venko	SK03	07.02.2024
'3D View – Proposed', Venko	SK04	07.02.2024

6.0 ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE IMPACT

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This Heritage Impact Statement has been prepared in relation to the following impact assessment criteria: the *Heritage Victoria Guidelines for preparing heritage impact statements* (2021). It also responds to the *Principles for Considering Change to Places in the Victorian Heritage Register*, made and published under s19(1)(f) of the Heritage Act 2017, December 2022 and the pre-application advice received from Heritage Victoria (P38323) regarding an earlier proposal.

6.2 EVALUATION AGAINST HERITAGE VICTORIA GUIDELINES

The following assessment is based on the assessment criteria set out in the *Heritage Victoria Guidelines for preparing heritage impact statements* (2021).

6.2.1 REASONS FOR THE ACTIVITY

The purpose of the proposed work is to improve DDA access at the site, which is currently inadequate. Currently, DDA access to the Baptist Church is difficult, demanding, and undignified for users, who have at times been unable to attend events or Baptist services held at the church. A platform lift was installed in 2010 to the Collins Street entrance, however, there are issues with this lift. The platform lift is very slow-moving, taking about 15 minutes per user, and is very difficult to operate. If multiple users need to use the lift, the slow movement of the lift requires users to arrive unreasonably early. The platform lift often jams and requires users to rely on assistance from personnel, particularly wheelchair users, which is often not enough to prevent issues with the lift. The platform lift is no longer adequate for the needs of the Baptist Church because of the ongoing operational and technical issues associated with the existing lift.

Dignified, equitable access requires that access should be through the main entrance for everyone. At present, mobility-impaired visitors must rely on the rear DDA access to gain entry to the building. Users often have to enter the premises through Baptist Place, an unlit and secluded rear laneway accessible only from Little Collins Street. This requires users to circle the block, a journey of over 300m, to enter the premises through the rear entry. For users who are able to get a car lift to Baptist Place, the laneway is narrow, making it difficult to drive down, and so users are often required to journey 50m down the length of the lane to reach the rear entrance. Once inside, users have to be ushered down multiple corridors, some of which are narrow and unable to accommodate larger wheelchairs, to reach their designated seating. This often requires the user to rely on the assistance of multiple staff, reducing their independence and making their access to the site reliant on the availability of others.

Several recorded instances have occurred in which wheelchair users were unable to access the rear entry as a result of illegally parked cars on Baptist Place, meaning users were unable to attend events held at the church.

Users who are required to enter through the rear DDA access often report to the Baptist Church that they feel unsafe using the rear access. When the church was hired by Victoria Chorale in September 2023, the organisation reported that Baptist Place was not safe to use, noting that the laneway was unlit and provided a setting for anti-social behaviour and activities.

The current issues with DDA access have infringed on the dignity of users. The proposed open-top lift will ensure that mobility-impaired visitors have equitable and dignified entry to

the church. The proposal will considerably lessen the time required by users to enter the Baptist Church down to two or three minutes and will allow users to operate the lift independently to enter through the front entrance. The proposal will increase the dignity of users by allowing them to enter through the main frontage on Collins Street. It will also provide a safer exit for mobility-impaired users in case of an emergency.

6.2.2 THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLACE OR OBJECT IS AFFECTED BY THE PROPOSAL [S 101(2)(A)].

The subject site is included on the Victorian Heritage Register as 'Baptist Church', 170-174 Collins Street, Melbourne (ID H0006). The Collins Street Baptist Church is recognised as being of architectural and historical significance to the state of Victoria.

Pre-application advice regarding the proposed works was sought from Heritage Victoria (P38323), who undertook a site visit on 24 May 2023. NBRS was engaged after this pre-application advice. During this stage, several options were presented to Heritage Victoria, with 'Option 1' being in principle the preferred proposed plan as indicated by Heritage Victoria. The proposed works are based on 'Option 1' and have been revised following and in accordance with this pre-application advice to reduce as much as possible its impact on the cultural heritage significance of the site.

The physical impact of the proposed works on the heritage significance of the subject site has been reduced as much as possible and will be minor. The proposed works have been limited to the southeastern portion of the site, in an area that has already been compromised by the introduction of a platform lift in 2010. Most of the built fabric in this area was introduced or modified during the 2010 works. Significant fabric within the area of the proposed works, including the pilaster and moulded base, will be retained. Works interacting with this fabric have been designed to be easily reversible at a future date, without damaging the significant fabric.

The materials and colours chosen for the proposed work will match the existing fabric and will consist of bluestone, timber, concrete, stainless steel, and glazing; some of the extant fabric will be reused at the site, such as the bluestone stairs. The use of similar materiality will reduce the visual impact of the proposal, ensuring that the works are cohesive with the existing setting and will appear as visually recessive.

The proposed works would impact views to the site on Collins Street, however, this impact would be minor as the works will be low in scale and form, and will be partly obscured from views along Collins Street. The transparent materials proposed, such as glazing to the balustrade and the fixed panels and doors of the lift, will reduce its impact on views of the Collins Street façade. Due to the location of the proposed work, the works will be largely obscured from eastern views on Collins Street by the extant building at 162-168 Collins Street. Part of the proposed works will be visible in views to the west of the Collins Street Baptist Church, however, the proposed lift will not obscure important views to significant elements of the Collins Street façade. This is a result of the generous setback (over 2.5m) maintained between the proposed lift and the Church façade.

Part of the proposed work will conceal the moulded base and part of the pilaster at the easternmost corner of the Collins Street elevation; the Collins Street frontage is considered integral to the heritage significance of the site. Overall, this will have a minor impact on the Collins Street façade and views to this elevation. The significant elements of the façade, including the giant portico, pediment, columns, decorative mouldings, openings, and centre bluestone stairs will remain legible and visually prominent. As such, the architectural

significance of the site will be retained and easily interpretable as a grand classical church in the Corinthian style; the historical significance of the site as the earliest continuing Baptist Church in Victoria will be retained and facilitated by the proposal.

Views of Central House and the interwar shop will not be impacted due to the distance from the proposed area of works and the setback from the street boundary.

6.2.3 THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE APPLICATION, IF REFUSED, WOULD AFFECT THE REASONABLE OR ECONOMIC USE OF THE REGISTERED PLACE OR REGISTERED OBJECT [S 101(2)(B)].

If the application for the proposed works were refused, it would have a considerable impact on the reasonable and economic use of the subject site.

Reasonable Use

Historically, the Collins Street Baptist Church has been used as a place of worship for the Melbourne Baptist community, a use which continues and has been recognised as contributing towards the historic significance of the site. However, access barriers are deterring visitors and members of the congregation from using the building. In particular, members of the congregation who are elderly or have mobility impairments have found it increasingly difficult to access the church via the stairs on the Collins Street entrance. The issues experienced with the existing platform lift, which include difficulty in operating and problems regarding its slow movement, cause congestion and have made the use of the platform lift impractical.

For congregants with limited mobility, the use of the stairs at the Collins Street entrance presents a safety concern as members often take a long time to reach the top and arrive out of breath and fatigued, increasing the risk of a fall; entering the Church by the rear DDA access on Baptist Place is not dignified for congregants with limited mobility. Similar problems are also experienced by members with prams or with medical issues. As a result of a lack of accessible entry, some members have stopped attending services and gatherings for certain periods of time, impacting the site's continued and reasonable use as a place of gathering and worship for the Baptist community.

The proposed works will provide dignified and equitable access to the Collins Street Baptist Church. Equitable accessibility has the potential to enhance and support its ongoing historic use by removing deterrents to visitors. A refusal of the application would mean that the current DDA access could not be upgraded to a contemporary standard and would affect the use of the site as a place of worship for the Baptist community.

Economic Use

The Collins Street Baptist Church is also rented by various organisations for events, concerts, and festivals. The venue hire arrangements at the church are an important source of income for the Baptist Church, who use the funds to conserve and maintain the building. The temporary use of the church for concerts and events is a compatible commercial use that ensures that it remains economically viable.

It is not uncommon for organisations to cancel their venue hire bookings at the Baptist Church due to the limitations of the existing DDA access provided. Lack of dignified and equitable access has been stated specifically as a reason for booking cancellations. For example, the Melbourne International Singers Festival were keen to hire the church in 2023 for their event, however, upon learning the current DDA access provided, the site was deemed to be inadequate, and the booking was cancelled.

Venue hirers seek spaces that are fully compliant with current DDA requirements, which include the provision of equitable and dignified access. A refusal of the application would mean that the DDA access could not be upgraded at the site and would therefore negatively impact the continuing compatible commercial use of the site.

6.2.4 THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE APPLICATION, IF APPROVED, WOULD AFFECT THE CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE OF ANY ADJACENT OR NEIGHBOURING PROPERTY

If approved, the impact of the proposed works on the cultural heritage significance of adjacent or nearby places would be minimal. The proposal does not include any works to nearby or adjacent places of heritage significance, either at the State or local level. The impact of the proposal would be to views in the immediate streetscape.

State Heritage Listings

The proposed works would not impact any adjacent State heritage buildings as there are no State heritage listed buildings directly adjacent to the subject site. The proposed works would not impact the fabric of any other State heritage building located in the street.

Most of the State heritage buildings in this portion of Collins Street, between Russell and Swanston streets, are located on the north side, meaning that the Baptist Church is not visible from most of the State-listed buildings in this portion.

Two State-listed sites are located on the south side, being the Regent Theatre (H0690, 191-197 Collins Street) and Formerly the Auditorium (H0416, 167-173 Collins Street). Current views to and from the Collins Street Baptist Church and the Regent Theatre would be largely maintained due to the distance (over 2.5m) to be maintained between the church façade and the proposed lift, which would not obscure views. Similarly, current views of the Collins Street Baptist Church from Formerly the Auditorium, which is located to the southeast of the subject site, would be mostly retained as the proposed work would be mostly obscured behind extant development at 162-168 Collins Street, which does not have a setback and sits forward of the Baptist Church.

The potential impact of the proposed works on views to Collins Street would be negligible with current primary views to and from the Collins Street Baptist Church to other State-listed heritage sites being largely maintained to the principal facades.

Local Heritage Listings

The nearby and adjacent properties to the subject site are located in local heritage overlays under the Melbourne Planning Scheme as both individual and precinct heritage overlays.

Individual heritage overlays adjacent to or near the subject site include:

- H0746 – Melbourne Town Hall and Administration Building, 90-130 Swanston Street, Melbourne;
- H0587 – Melbourne Athenaeum, 184-192 Collins Street, Melbourne;
- H0846 – 182 Collins Street, Melbourne;
- H0585 – 176-180 Collins Street, Melbourne;
- H0582 – 162-168 Collins Street, Melbourne;
- H0580 – Assembly Hall, 156-160 Collins Street, Melbourne;
- H0578 – Scots Church, 140-154 Collins Street, Melbourne;
- H0589 – Regent Theatre, 191-197 Collins Street & 186-200 Flinders Lane, Melbourne;
- H0586 – 181-187 Collins Street, Melbourne;
- H0584 – 175-177 Collins Street, Melbourne;

- H0581 – Formerly the Auditorium, 167-173 Collins Street & 172-180 Flinders Lane, Melbourne; and
- H0579 – 141-153 Collins Street, Melbourne.

All sites cited above are also included in the precinct heritage overlay H0504 (Collins East Precinct) under the Melbourne Planning Scheme.

60 Swanston Street and 201 Collins Street, which are near the subject site, are located in the precinct heritage overlay H0505, Flinders Gate Precinct.

No works are proposed to any other building within a local heritage overlay; intervention into the building at 162-168 Collins Street has been minimised as much as possible with a 0.2m gap to be maintained between the proposed lift and the adjacent building. The proposed floating deck can be removed and its interventions reversible.

The main impact of the proposal on nearby sites will be on views, which have been minimised as much as possible through sensitive design, considered placement, a generous setback, and the careful selection of colours and materials. The open-top lift will sit lower than the enclosed top lift originally proposed at the pre-application meeting, reducing its potential impact on views. The doors and fixed panels of the proposed lift will be transparent, which will assist in making the lift appear recessive and allow for views to be maintained to the church façade. The proposed lift has been positioned to the southeast corner, away from the Collins Street façade as much as possible and with a considerable setback from the church façade of over 2.5m, which will ensure clear views are retained to the Baptist Church along Collins Street. The materials and colours have been selected to match the existing fabric and setting.

The proposed works will be mainly obscured in views from the east of Collins Street by the extant building at 162-168 Collins Street.

The careful design of the alterations will ensure that the proposed works will appear recessive within the wider streetscape, reducing its impact on views from and to nearby local heritage sites.

6.2.5 OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Initially, three options for improved DDA access to the Collins Street frontage were considered and presented to Heritage Victoria (HV) during a pre-application meeting (P38323). NBRS was commissioned after the pre-application meeting with HV.

'Option 1' included the installation of one lift with a deck. 'Option 2' and 'Option 3' each included the installation of two lifts. HV indicated to the client that 'Option 1' was in principle the preferred proposed plan.

From a heritage perspective, the option with the least intervention and impact on the heritage significance of the site is preferable. 'Option 2' would have required the installation of two lifts, which would have had a greater impact on the setting of the site by introducing two new forms. Additionally, the proposed location of the second lift was not large enough to accommodate this structure, which would have required greater intervention into the eastern façade of the church to make the lift compliant. 'Option 3' would have introduced a second lift to the central entrance on the Collins Street frontage, which would have been more disruptive to views of the main façade. 'Option 1' would be the preferred option from a heritage perspective as it introduces the least amount of new fabric and is more discreetly

located in an area of recent alteration. The installation of one lift instead of two is also preferable from a DDA access and cost perspective.

'Option 1' requires the least intervention into significant heritage fabric and would provide dignified front entry to the building for mobility-impaired visitors. The area of the proposed works was considerably modified in 2010 and mainly comprises modern or altered fabric; the significant historic fabric in this area will be protected and retained, being a portion of the easternmost pilaster and its moulded base. This option also requires the minimum amount of demolition, alteration, and construction to achieve suitable and dignified DDA access.

Upgrading the rear DDA access was considered and deemed unfeasible since it would not provide dignified and equitable access to mobility-impaired visitors. Dignified access means that the visitor can access the building via the primary entrance, on the same basis as other visitors. Altering the rear DDA access provided would require greater physical intervention into heritage fabric. Upgrading the rear DDA access would likely involve internal alterations to widen corridors, introduce openings and ramps, and level flooring; this would not solve the main issues regarding this rear DDA access, being its rear location and undignified entry.

Since NBRS was commissioned by the client, 'Option 1' has been further amended to reduce the impact of the proposal on the heritage significance of the site. These amendments include changing the proposed lift to an open-top lift (without a roof) with transparent fixed panels and doors to reduce its height and visual bulk, allowing views to be retained to the Collins Street façade.

6.2.6 MANAGEMENT AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Various measures have been undertaken to mitigate and manage the impact of the proposed works at the subject site, ensuring significant historic fabric is retained and works are reversible. Most of the works will occur to contemporary fabric, which was altered or constructed in 2010.

The impact of the proposed works on the setting of the place has been mitigated and managed through the use of similar extant materials and colours. The proposed fabric to be introduced will match the materiality and colour of the extant fabric, which will reduce the impact of the proposed works. Some of the extant fabric will be reused in the works, including the smaller of the bluestone steps which will be retained and re-used in the proposed stairs.

Since the pre-application meeting with Heritage Victoria, the design has been revised and an alternative lift proposed that will reduce its impact on the site. Previously, an enclosed lift with a roof was proposed; the proposal has been amended and an open-top lift is proposed instead, which has reduced the height of the lift. The lower height of the proposed lift will reduce its impact on views to the Collins Street frontage of the Baptist Church. The open-top lift will be enclosed with fixed transparent panels and a full-height transparent door to the first (lowest) level for security reasons, with a half-height door to its second (topmost) level, also transparent. The siting of the proposed lift has been sensitively considered to reduce its impact on the site, with the lift proposed located to an area consisting of contemporary and modified fabric, and with a generous setback from the front façade (over 2.5m).

The potential impact of the proposed works has been mitigated by ensuring works that interact with significant fabric are easily removable and reversible. The portion of the proposed works that will interact with significant historic fabric at the site, being the proposed timber deck and timber stairs to the southeasternmost corner of the church, has been designed to be lightweight and reversible with minimal intervention into the façade. The

moulded base and pilaster will be maintained and protected during the works, being retained under the timber stairs and deck. As such, the timber deck and stairs can be removed and the works to the façade easily reversed, reducing the impact of the works on the site.

6.2.7 REASONS WHY THE PROPOSED WORKS SHOULD BE SUPPORTED.

In response to the pre-application advice provided by Heritage Victoria (P38323), changes to the proposed design have been made in line with their advice to reduce the impact of the proposal.

The proposal should be supported as the impact of the proposed works has been minimised where possible, with the works mainly confined to an area that is considerably modified and comprises fabric that mainly dates to 2010; works that will interact with the historic fabric of the façade will be lightweight and reversible. The proposed materials and colours chosen will match the existing materiality and palette of the subject site, reducing its impact on the setting; some of the extant fabric will be reused in the proposed works. A generous setback of over 2.5m will be maintained between the church façade and the proposed lift, which will reduce the physical and visual impact of the lift on the church's frontage.

The proposal will also greatly improve the current DDA access to the Baptist Church, providing an equitable, safer, and dignified entry for users. With the improved DDA access, users will not have to enter through the rear access. The improved DDA access will include a lift that will be more efficient, allowing users to operate the lift on their own and greatly reducing congestion. The improved DDA access will allow users to more easily enter the site through the Collins Street frontage, without relying on the assistance of personnel or for them to arrive unreasonably early. Collins Street, which is busier and well-lit compared to Baptist Place, is a safer entry point for DDA access users.

The economic viability of the site as a hire venue for concerts, festivals, and events has been negatively impacted by the lack of equitable and dignified DDA access. This has resulted in the loss of revenue as potential hiring organisations and groups have cancelled their bookings specifically as a result of the lack of dignified DDA access. Improving the DDA access to the site will ensure that the church will remain competitive in the commercial market and economically viable. This will ensure the compatible economic and historic use of the site will be retained.

6.3 PRINCIPLES FOR CONSIDERING CHANGE TO PLACES IN THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER

This section is based on and responses to the *Principles for Considering Change to Places in the Victorian Heritage Register*, made and published under s19(1)(f) of the Heritage Act 2017, December 2022. The principles in this document provide guidance for considering change to a place listed in the Victorian Heritage Register.

Principle 1. Understand Why the Place is Significant

The Collins Street Baptist Church is included on the Victorian Heritage Register as 'Baptist Church', 170-174 Collins Street, Melbourne (ID H0006) and is recognised as being of architectural and historical significance to the state of Victoria. The site is architecturally significant as an early Classical inspired church in the Corinthian style. Historically, the site is significant for its continuous historic use as a place of worship for the Melbourne Baptist community.

The architectural and historic significance of the site will be retained. The historic significance will be enhanced and supported by the proposed works by increasing access to the site for congregants to the Baptist Church who have limited mobility.

Principle 2. A Cautious Approach

The proposed works will require the least intervention into the significant heritage fabric at the subject site and are the minimum required to achieve equitable and dignified DDA access.

The area of proposed works is largely comprised of recent and modified fabric. If the proposed works were to be located elsewhere on the Collins Street frontage to achieve the dignified access required, more interventions and alterations would likely be needed into significant heritage fabric.

Principle 3. Protect Significant Settings and Views

The significant setting and views have been retained, and the impact of the proposed works has been reduced as much as possible.

The impact of the proposed work on the setting has been minimised by adopting a materiality to match the existing fabric at the site; some of the extant fabric will be reused at the site, such as the bluestone stairs. This similar materiality will reduce the visual impact, ensuring that the works are cohesive with the existing setting and will appear as visually recessive. New materials introduced will be lightweight and visually permeable, further reducing the visual impact of the works.

The significant views to the Collins Street Baptist Church and along Collins Street will be retained, with its impact minimised through the sensitive siting and positioning of the proposed work. The proposed open-top lift will have a generous setback (over 2.5m) from the Collins Street façade and will be sited to the southeasternmost portion of the site. This will allow for important views of the Church's significant façade elements, including the giant portico, pediment, columns, decorative mouldings, openings, and centre bluestone stairs, to remain legible and visually prominent. The proposed works will partially obscure the moulded base and part of the pilaster located at the easternmost corner of the Collins Street façade, however, significant views will be retained of important façade fabric, ensuring that the site remains easily interpretable as a grand Classical inspired church in the Corinthian style.

The proposed works will be largely obscured from eastern views on Collins Street by the extant building at 162-168 Collins Street.

Principle 4. Respectful Change and New Built Form.

The proposed works are respectful of the site and its cultural heritage significance, with the new built form to be low in scale, sympathetic in materiality, and generously setback to allow for significant views to be maintained.

The new built form has been designed to reduce its impact on views to significant heritage fabric at the site. Important views to the Church's significant façade elements, including the giant portico, pediment, columns, decorative mouldings, openings, and centre bluestone stairs, will be maintained. The considerable setback of the proposed lift will ensure that it does not impact views to the church façade from the west of Collins Street. The works will be concealed from the east of Collins Street by the extant building at no. 162-168.

No significant heritage elements at the site will be demolished; the new structures that interact with significant fabric will be lightweight and easily reversible. A minor portion of the front façade will be obscured being the moulded base and part of the pilaster to the southeasternmost corner, however, this will not reduce the interpretation and readability of the architectural significance of the church, which will remain legible and is therefore considered as a minor impact.

Principle 5. Provide for Upkeep.

The proposed works will provide equitable and dignified access for mobility-impaired users. This will enhance and support the reasonable use of the site, which has retained its historic use as a place of worship for the Baptist community. The economic use of the site as a hireable venue for events and festivals will also be enhanced, allowing for sufficient income to be generated and used in the upkeep of the site.

6.4 HERITAGE VICTORIA PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE

Several concerns or comments were raised in the pre-application advice (P38323) provided by Heritage Victoria. These queries have been addressed below.

6.4.1 MINIMUM REQUIRED WORKS TO ACHIEVE DDA ACCESS

The proposed works were determined as requiring the least intervention into the significant heritage fabric at the subject site. The proposed works are the minimum required to achieve equitable and dignified DDA access, with alternative options considered (discussed in Section 6.2.5) requiring more intervention into significant fabric or would have a greater impact on views. The area of proposed works is largely comprised of recent and considerably modified fabric dating to 2010; historic fabric of significance in this area will be protected and retained, and a gap of 0.2m maintained between the proposed lift and the local heritage place at 162-168 Collins Street. The proposed lift will be setback considerably (over 2.5m) from the Collins Street façade of the Baptist Church, reducing its visual and physical impact on this façade and on views in Collins Street.

If the proposed works were to be located elsewhere to the Collins Street frontage, more interventions and alterations would likely be required into significant heritage fabric, such as the main bluestone entry stairs or the Central House interwar shop. It would also have a greater impact on the main entryway of the Collins Street entrance and would be more disruptive to access flows in and out of the building.

Altering the rear DDA access provided would likely require more intervention into internal heritage fabric as it would involve alterations to the interior to widen corridors, introduce openings and ramps, and level flooring. Nor would this option solve the main issues with the current rear DDA access used, being its rear location which does not allow for dignified access for mobility-impaired users.

6.4.2 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROPOSED WALKWAY AND LIFT

In preparation of the proposal, various options have been considered regarding the connecting link between the proposed lift and the breezeway, with a timber walkway presented as the most accessible and least invasive option.

In order to provide DDA access, a raised deck is required between the proposed lift and the emergency access to the east side of the Collins Street Baptist Church; DDA users can enter the church, the main service area, and seating through the emergency exit without any

internal changes required. The area comprising the proposed walkway is too steep for a ramp to be introduced that would comply with DDA requirements.

As the proposed walkway provides access to the emergency entry, stairs are required to the walkway to ensure patrons can safely use this exit in the event of an emergency. As such, the chosen option will need to account for the requirement of stairs. It is also preferable that the lift be located away from the Baptist Church façade, which will considerably reduce any visual and physical impacts on the church façade.

The proposed lift is an open-top lift (without a roof) with two stops. A raised walkway will provide enough space for users with wheelchairs, trolleys, and prams to safely alight from the lift. The height of the proposed walkway will be the minimum required to meet the height of the extant stairs leading to the breezeway; there should be as few level changes as possible in DDA access routes, which makes it easier for users to traverse. The walkway also needs to accommodate emergency exit stairs, which requires a walkway of a level height.

A previous option ('Option 2') was presented to Heritage Victoria in a pre-application meeting (P38323) in which a lift was proposed to the east elevation of the Baptist Church instead of a walkway; this was in addition to the lift between the lowest concrete platform and the highest concrete platform. There was found to be insufficient space for this second lift, which would therefore have required more extensive interventions into the eastern elevation of the church to allow for the lift. Moving this second lift forward to sit along the south façade would still require the construction of a walkway and/or demolition of extant fabric. A second lift would also increase the difficulty of this DDA access for users and would impact its use as an emergency exit for non-DDA users. As such, a second lift would be inappropriate.

A concrete platform was considered, however, this would have a greater impact on the extant fabric, particularly on the façade of the church. Timber has been proposed for the walkway as a reversible option that would require the least intervention into the extant fabric. The timber deck will allow for the extant concrete stairs, moulded base, and pilaster to the easternmost corner of the Collins Street façade to be retained in-situ. The proposed timber deck will match the existing timber deck to the breezeway. The proposed stairs will also be of timber, which will be easier to install, easily reversible, and will allow for the fire hose reel piping to be routed underneath.

6.4.3 IMPACT ON SETTING AND VIEWS IN COLLINS STREET

The proposal has been designed to reduce the impact of the works on the setting of and views on Collins Street. The proposed works will be low in scale and form, with generous façade setbacks (over 2.5m for the proposed lift) and a sympathetic materiality that will reduce its impact. The proposed works will not impact views of or to any other building on Collins Street.

Since the pre-application advice provided by Heritage Victoria, the proposal has been revised with an open-top lift proposed instead of an enclosed lift. This open-top lift, which will have a half-height door to its second (topmost) landing, will reduce the amount of panelling required and its height, minimising the solidity of the structure thereby reducing its visual dominance and impact on views. The panels to the elevations of the proposed lift are required for security. The panels of the proposed lift will be transparent, which will assist in making the lift appear more recessive.

The impact of the proposed works on the setting of the place has been reduced where possible through the use of similar materials and colours. The materials selected in the

proposal replicate the current materiality of the southeastern corner of the site (the area of the proposed works) with concrete, bluestone, timber, steel handrails, and glazed balustrades to match the existing. New material types to be introduced will be minimal, helping to ensure the current setting is maintained.

The proposed works, being mainly the lift and timber stairs, will obscure the moulded base and part of the pilaster located at the easternmost corner of the Collins Street façade. This pilaster has previous interventions, with a portion of the base removed in 2010. While the proposed works will obscure the moulded base and part of the pilaster, significant views will be retained to important façade fabric, such as the pediment, columns, moulded detailing, openings, and central bluestone stairs. As such, views to important elements of the Collins Street frontage will be retained, which will ensure that the site remains easily interpretable as a grand classical church in the Corinthian style.

The proposed lift will be setback from the Collins Street boundary of the site and will sit closely alongside (but not against) the building at 162-168 Collins Street, Melbourne. The proposed lift will have a 0.2 metre setback from 162-168 Collins Street and will be visually distinguishable because of its simple contemporary form and lightweight materials. Due to the location of the proposed works, the proposed lift will be largely obscured from eastern views on Collins Street by the extant building at 162-168 Collins Street. As such, the impact of the proposed works on eastern views on Collins Street is negligible.

The proposed works will be visible in western views on Collins Street, however, its impact on views to the Collins Street façade of the Baptist Church will be minor. When viewed from the west of Collins Street, the lift will not obscure views to the south façade of the Baptist Church because of the generous setback (over 2.5m) introduced between the proposed lift and the church façade. The lift will be setback nearly 4m from the street boundary. These setbacks will allow for views to be maintained to the Collins Street frontage of the Baptist Church, particularly when viewed from the west.

6.4.4 WHY IS THE CHOSEN LOCATION PROPOSED

The location of the proposed works has been chosen for its ability to provide an equitable and dignified DDA access point. The location has also been assessed as requiring the least intervention into significant heritage fabric as the area was recently altered and consists mainly of modern materials, reducing significantly the need to alter historic fabric.

The location of the proposed DDA access to the Collins Street frontage was decided as a means to provide reliable, functional, and dignified entry for mobility-impaired users. A platform lift was installed in 2010 to the Collins Street entrance, however, there are issues with this lift, being very difficult to operate, slow-moving, and relies on assistance from personnel to use. The current DDA access most often used is through Baptist Place, a rear laneway that users and hiring organisations have reported as being unsafe at night. A DDA access point on Collins Street is a safer, more equitable, and dignified entry point for users. The requirement for users to enter via the rear access point infringes on their dignity. The proposed lift on the Collins Street frontage would resolve these issues, allowing users to enter through the main frontage and to access their seating unaided.

Locating the proposed lift elsewhere along the Collins Street frontage would require intervention into significant heritage fabric, such as the main bluestone entry stairs or the Central House shop. As such, locating the proposed DDA access elsewhere along the Collins Street frontage would have a considerable adverse impact on the historic fabric and heritage significance of the site.

7.0 CONCLUSION

The impact of the proposed works at the Collins Street Baptist Church, located at 174 Collins Street, Melbourne, has been reduced as much as possible and would overall have a minor impact on the heritage significance of the site. The Collins Street Baptist Church is recognised as being of architectural and historical significance to the state of Victoria.

The proposed works will greatly improve the DDA access at the site, which is currently unreliable, being prone to breakdown and causing congestion. The existing lift requires the assistance of another person to operate. This does not comply with current DDA requirements, which promote dignified, equitable, and independent access to all places. The platform lift installed in 2010 to the Collins Street frontage is difficult to use and operate; the platform lift is no longer adequate for the needs of the church, impacting its reasonable and economic use. The current DDA access relied upon by the Baptist Church is through the rear entrance on Baptist Place, which is also inadequate and does not provide dignified and equitable entry.

Following the pre-application meeting with Heritage Victoria, the proposal has been further revised in line with the Heritage Victoria officer's advice to reduce the impact of the works as much as possible. The proposed works are the minimum required to achieve equitable and dignified DDA access. The potential impact of the proposed works has been mitigated by ensuring works that interact with significant fabric are easily removable and reversible. The materials and colours chosen for the proposed work will match the existing fabric, reducing the visual impact of the proposed works. The proposed works will be low in scale and with a generous setback of over 2.5m proposed between the open-top lift and the church façade, which will assist in mitigating any potential physical and visual impacts of the lift on the church frontage.

The proposed works would impact views to the site and along Collins Street, however, this impact would be minor. While part of the proposed work will conceal the moulded base and part of the pilaster at the easternmost corner of the Collins Street façade, views to significant fabric such as the pediment, columns, moulded detailing, and centre bluestone stairs will be retained, allowing for the building to be easily interpretable and readable as a grand classical church in the Corinthian style. The works will facilitate the historical significance of the site by ensuring its historic use as a place of worship for the Baptist community continues.



Dr Elizabeth Offer
Heritage Consultant
NBRS
25 February 2025