

# FORMER COMMONWEALTH NOTE AND STAMP PRINTING DEPARTMENT



1924 building fronting Victoria Parade



Aerial photo of the place showing registered extent



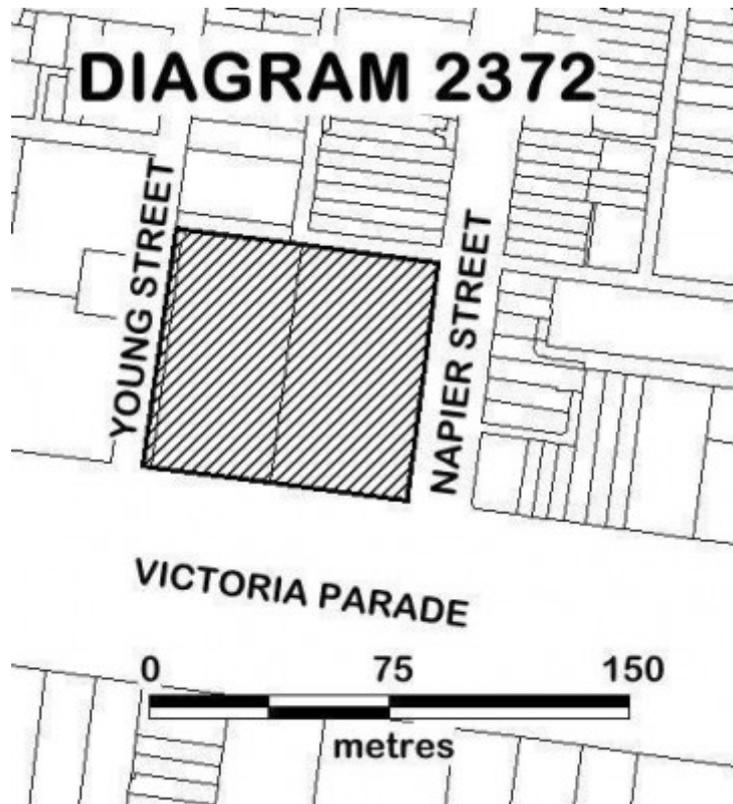
Western elevation



1931 building, view from corner of Little Victoria and Napier streets



view from corner of Napier Street and Victoria Parade looking NW



Former Commonwealth Note and Stamp Printing Department extent diagram 2372

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### **Location**

115 VICTORIA PARADE FITZROY, YARRA CITY

### **Municipality**

YARRA CITY

### **Level of significance**

Registered

### **Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number**

H2372

### **VHR Registration**

September 1, 2017

### **Heritage Listing**

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is significant?

The Former Commonwealth Note and Stamp Printing Department building, including all architectural elements, a reinforced concrete frame and load bearing floors, and remnant fencing, located on a block bounded by Victoria Parade, and Young, Little Victoria and Napier Streets. The elements of the late twentieth century/early twenty-first century exterior and interior refurbishment are not of significance.

### *History Summary*

Between Federation in 1901 and the establishment of Parliament in Canberra in 1927, Melbourne was the seat of the Commonwealth Government. Administration of important government processes including the design, manufacture and issuing of postage stamps, bank notes and government security products took place in Melbourne. The Note and Stamp Printing departments initially operated from the Queens Warehouse (VHR H1211), but these premises were considered inadequate and in 1919, the Government acquired a property on Victoria Parade with the intention of establishing new premises. After consideration of Sydney and Canberra as alternative locations, the Victoria Parade site was regarded as the most suitable, and designs were prepared by Commonwealth Architect, John Smith Murdoch. However, when the Commonwealth Bank took over responsibility for the issue of bank notes in 1920, Murdoch's designs were replaced with those prepared by John Kirkpatrick, the Bank's official architect. Kirkpatrick's design was constructed by 1924, and construction of a new wing to the design of Commonwealth Chief Architect, E H Henderson began in 1930. The Victoria Parade premises saw many changes in production and technology, including the change to decimal currency in 1966, which affected both notes and stamps, and research into polymer bank notes in the 1970s. On 19 October 1981, the Victoria Parade premises were closed and operations were relocated to Craigieburn where notes continue to be printed. The Victoria Parade site was purchased by the Australian Catholic University in 1998 and has undergone extensive alterations to operate as the University's Melbourne campus.

### *Description Summary*

The Former Commonwealth Note and Stamp Printing Department is an L shaped building contained within a block bounded by Victoria Parade, and Young, Little Victoria and Napier Streets. The building was completed in stages, which is evident in the design. A carpark is located in the south-eastern corner of the site.

The earliest building faces Victoria Parade and is six storeys high with a symmetrical front elevation comprising large plate glass windows to the three centre bays, flanked by end bays each containing three narrow windows. The two lower levels are partially enclosed by a modern glass and metal framed entrance ramp and a modern glass enclosed staircase is located on the eastern wall.

The 1930s wing is located along Little Victoria Street at the rear of the site. The architectural detailing is similar to the earlier building, but more simplistic in design and form. A modern glass addition encloses most of the southern elevation. Internally, the buildings have been substantially altered, although the structure of the building, including external walls, reinforced concrete columns and load bearing floors is still evident.

There is currently no Registered Aboriginal Party or Registered Native Title Body Corporate for the subject land.

How is it significant?

The Former Commonwealth Note and Stamp Printing Department is of historical significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

#### Criterion A

Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history.

#### Criterion B

Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history.

Why is it significant?

The Former Commonwealth Note and Stamp Printing Department is significant at the State level for the following reasons:

The Former Commonwealth Note and Stamp Printing Department is historically significant as the place where all Commonwealth secure products, including stamps and bank notes for Australia and its overseas territories were designed, printed and issued from 1924. It was designed and constructed when Melbourne was the seat of the Commonwealth Government and produced stamps and bank notes until 1981. The Former Commonwealth Note and Stamp Printing Department is also historically significant for its association with the Commonwealth Bank of Australia which was established in 1911 by the Commonwealth Government and was responsible for the issue of bank notes from 1920. [Criterion A]

The Former Commonwealth Note and Stamp Printing Department is historically significant as one of a suite of buildings constructed during the important period when Melbourne was the seat of government from Federation in 1901, to 1927 when Parliament was established in Canberra. Other buildings constructed during this period include the Federal Court of Australia (VHR H1476), the Former Mail Exchange (VHR H0881), the Commonwealth Offices building (which cannot be included in the VHR as it remains in Commonwealth ownership) and the Commonwealth Clothing Factory (now demolished). These buildings were constructed to perform specific Commonwealth duties and as symbols of the new nation, were designed to focus on modernity, efficiency and innovation. [Criterion A]

The Former Commonwealth Note and Stamp Printing Department is rare as a purpose built building for the design, manufacture and issue of banknotes, stamps and other secure government products for use in Australia and its territories, during the comparably short period when Melbourne was the seat of the Commonwealth Government (1901-1927). The place is rare as one of only three places in Victoria, indeed in Australia, where Federal Government note printing and issue took place. The other two are the Queens Warehouse (VHR H1211) and the existing Craigieburn premises in use since 1981. [Criterion B]

## Permit Exemptions

<p>It should be noted that Permit Exemptions can be granted at the time of registration (under s.42(4) of the Heritage Act). Permit Exemptions can also be applied for and granted after registration (under s.66 of the Heritage Act)</p> <p class="c1">General Condition 1</p> <p>All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object.</p> <p class="c1">General Condition 2</p> <p>Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible.</p> <p class="c1">General Condition 3</p> <p>All works should ideally be informed by Conservation Management Plans prepared for the place. The Executive Director is not bound by any Conservation Management Plan, and permits still must be obtained for works suggested in any Conservation Management Plan.</p> <p class="c1">General Condition 4</p> <p>Nothing in this determination prevents the Heritage Council from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.</p> <p class="c1">General Condition 5</p> <p>Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the relevant responsible authority, where applicable.</p> <p class="c1">Specific Permit Exemptions:</p> <p>Works and alterations to the following buildings and features are permit exempt:</p> <p class="c1">Exterior</p> <p>. Repairs and maintenance which replace like with like.</p> <p>. Removal, replacement, repair or installation of building and fire services in a manner that does not alter the original structural system of the building, including the reinforced concrete columns and load bearing floors.</p> <p>. Repair or replacement of existing glass including glass walling, windows and doors (revolving, fixed and hinged).<b>Interior</b></p> <p><b>.</b> Painting of previously painted walls and ceilings provided that preparation or painting does not remove original paint schemes or original painted signage.</p> <p>. Installation, removal or replacement of carpets and/or flexible floor coverings.</p> <p>. Demolition or removal of partition walls, suspended ceilings, screens, doors, built-in cupboards, computer and office fitout and equipment and the like.</p> <p>. Refurbishment of existing bathrooms, toilets and kitchens including removal, installation or replacement of sanitary fixtures and associated piping, mirrors, wall tiling and floor coverings and the like.</p> <p>. Installation, removal or replacement of all information technology, communication, security and cleaning infrastructure and equipment, including electric clocks, public address and speaker systems, detectors, alarms, lights, emergency lights, exit signs and the like.</p> <p>. Installation, removal, repair or replacement of building and fire services in a manner that does not alter the original structural system of the building, including reinforced concrete columns and load bearing floors.</p> <p>. Repair or

replacement of lifts and escalators.

Installation, removal or replacement of way-finding signage and signage relating to building security and the identification of tenants.

The installation and relocation of lightweight partitioning to allow for meetings rooms, offices, staff kitchenettes and the like, provided that the partitioning or any part of the structure is not abutting an external window.

All works in the basement excluding works to the internal structure required to support the building. (check for original elements onsite)

## Theme

### 5. Building Victoria's industries and workforce 7. Governing Victorians

Construction dates 1922,

Heritage Act Categories Registered place,

Other Names FORMER NOTE AND STAMP PRINTING WORKS, NOTE PRINTING BUILDING, STAMP FACTORY, COMMONWEALTH NOTE AND STAMP PRINTING DEPARTMENT, AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY,

Hermes Number 199986

Property Number

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## History

**HISTORY**

The development of an Australian currency and postage stamp

Bank notes

When the colony of New South Wales was established in 1788, there was little need for currency. A barter system based primarily on rum emerged, however as the colony progressed, the need for a more formal currency became evident. A variety of systems followed, including handwritten credit notes, English and Spanish coins, and in 1817, following the formation of the Bank of New South Wales, the first bank notes. Following the discovery of gold in 1851, many private banks were established, each of whom produced their own notes which were exchanged for gold. The *Australian Notes Act of 1910* gave responsibility for the issue of bank notes to the Commonwealth Treasury, and notes issued by States or private banks were overprinted and used as Australian bank notes.

Stamps

Prior to the formation of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901, each of the six individual colonies produced their own stamps through their own postal systems. Following Federation, this became a centralised Commonwealth responsibility, administered through the Postmaster-General's Department.

Establishment of the Commonwealth Note and Stamp Printing Department

Between Federation in 1901 and the official opening of the Commonwealth Parliament House in Canberra in 1927, Melbourne was the seat of the Commonwealth Government. Tasks relating to the administration of the Government took place in Melbourne, including the design, manufacture and issuing of postage stamps, which was the responsibility of the Postmaster General, and the design, manufacture and issuing of bank notes and all other secure products, which was the responsibility of the Commonwealth Department of Treasury.

In 1908, part of the Queens Warehouse (VHR H1211) also known as the King's Warehouse was acquired for the Commonwealth Stamp Printer and in 1912, the remainder of the building was taken over by the Commonwealth Note Printer. In 1913, the first Australian bank notes and stamps were produced in this building. The bank notes were designed and printed by Thomas Harrison, Note Printer. The first Australian stamp was the outcome of a controversial design competition which reflected the differences between monarchists and republicans. The winning design featured King George V, however Post Master General Charles Frazer (appointed by the new Labor Government) intervened and the final design was produced by artist Blamire Young, with input from Frazer. It featured a kangaroo within an outline of Australia. When the Liberal Government won the next election, Frazer was replaced by Agar Wynne, who delivered a new stamp featuring King George V. Both versions remained in circulation until 1948.

A proposal for new premises

Although Australia's first bank notes were printed at the Queens Warehouse (VHR H1211), the building was unsuitable for printing purposes, which required an environment free from dust, smoke and chemicals. However the establishment of new premises could not be considered during World War One.

Following the war, in 1919, the Government acquired a

property at the corner of Victoria Parade and Young Street with the intention of relocating the Stamp and Note Printing departments to this site. It had previously been occupied by the Turn Verein, a German social and gymnastics Club which had been forced to close in 1915 by the Commonwealth Government. Substantial nineteenth century buildings remained on the site and all note sorting staff (who were located at either the Queens Warehouse or the Commonwealth Offices) initially worked from these.

Following the purchase of the property, evidence was heard by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works regarding the Proposed Erection of the Commonwealth Note Printing Offices. Twenty five witnesses were heard, including Thomas Harrison, Note and Stamp Printer. The Committee also considered other locations for the new premises, including Canberra and Sydney. It was considered that Sydney would not be cost effective as all the equipment would require relocation from Melbourne. Canberra was also considered unsuitable due to the cost of establishing new premises, as well as a new village to accommodate 220 staff. In addition it was not known when the Seat of Federal Government would be transferred to Canberra and this uncertainty, together with the exorbitant costs, prompted the Committee to conclude that Melbourne was the most appropriate location for new printing premises.

Thomas Harrison had given strong evidence to the Standing Committee which condemned the Queen's Warehouse (VHR H1211) premises. He stated that the building was a fire risk due to the storage of note printing chemicals, as well as chemicals stored by Customs. If a fire did break out, he claimed that the 'girls on the top floor had no means of escape' and production would be delayed while replacement equipment, inks and papers were imported. In addition, the nearby gasworks emitted sulphur and ammonia which tarnished the machines and affected certain print colours. He advised the Committee that the most suitable premises would require almost airtight conditions, free from gas, smoke and damp.

Harrison was in favour of the Victoria Parade location due to its elevation and atmospheric conditions. He visited the site with the government's Chief Architect, John Smith Murdoch and advised on the size and layout of the new building.

New premises for the Commonwealth Note and Stamp Printing Department

John Smith Murdoch completed designs for the new building, however they were never constructed. In December 1920, the Commonwealth Bank Act transferred responsibility for the issue of bank notes from the Treasury Department to the Commonwealth Bank of Australia which had been formed in 1911. Commonwealth Bank Governor Denison Miller had appointed his cousin John Kirkpatrick as official bank architect in 1912. In 1921, based on the evidence of witnesses heard by the Standing Committee, Kirkpatrick proposed a new, larger design, and it was his design which was constructed.

In 1920, the Treasury note sorting staff moved into the former Turn Verein buildings and in 1922, work commenced on the new building with the intention of retaining the Turn Verein buildings for note sorting and engraving. New imported note presses were installed, and existing machinery and equipment was transferred from the Queens Warehouse (VHR H1211). The building was completed in 1924, however both Miller and Kirkpatrick died in 1923, before its completion. In 1926, Thomas Harrison resigned, having made a significant contribution to the development of Australian bank note and stamp production, and to the design of the new premises.

Stamp and note production commenced in the building in 1924.

Additions and alterations

Within years, the department outgrew its new building, and by 1931 a four storey wing at the rear of the site was under construction. This wing was built in two stages to allow operations to continue in the former Turn Verein building. Once the eastern section was completed, equipment was moved in, the Turn Verein building was demolished and the wing was completed. The building was expected to be ready for occupation in February 1933. In 1953 an additional two storeys were added to the western end of the wing, bringing it up to the same height as the 1924 building.

Towards new premises

From its establishment the Commonwealth Note and Stamp Printing Department premises saw many changes in production and technology. In 1960, responsibility for the issue of bank notes was transferred to the newly established Reserve Bank, which oversaw the change to decimal currency in 1966, one of the biggest changes in the history of the Department. During the 1970s, the Currency Note Research Development and CSIRO began research into the production of polymer notes.

On 19 October 1981, 115 Victoria Parade ceased to be the premises of the note and stamp printing department. Although the research development department remained at the site, all other operations were relocated to Craigieburn where bank notes are still produced. The Victoria Parade site was purchased by the Australian Catholic University in 1998. It has undergone extensive alterations and now operates as the University's Melbourne campus.

**KEY REFERENCES USED TO PREPARE ASSESSMENT**

Minutes of Evidence (1919) Report relating to the proposed erection of Commonwealth Printing Offices

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works

Entries in Australian Dictionary of Biographies for Sir Denison Miller and John Kirkpatrick.

## Plaque Citation

This building was erected in 1924 when Melbourne was the seat of the new nation's federal government. Until 1981 Australia's bank notes, postage stamps and high security products were designed and produced within the building.

## Assessment Against Criteria

### Criterion

The Former Commonwealth Note and Stamp Printing Department is of historical significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

### Criterion A

Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history.

### Criterion B

Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history.

## Extent of Registration

### NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the **Heritage Act 1995**, I give notice under section 46 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by including the following place in the Heritage Register:

Number: H2372

Category: Heritage Place

Place: Former Commonwealth Note and Stamp Printing Department

Location: 115 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy

Yarra City

All of the place shown hatched on Diagram 2372 encompassing all of Lot 1 on Title Plan 844284, all of Title Plan 3475 and all of Lot 1 on Title Plan 568633.

Dated 31 August 2017

STEVEN AVERY

Executive Director

[*Victoria Government Gazette* G 35 31 August 2017 1909]

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*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*