

# Victorian Heritage Database Report

Report generated 18/11/18

HERITAGE  
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## FORMER RECORDS OFFICE



FORMER RECORDS OFFICE SOHE  
2008



registry of births deaths & marriages  
queen street melbourne front view  
feb1985



1 registry of births deaths & marriages  
queen street melbourne front elevation  
apr1989



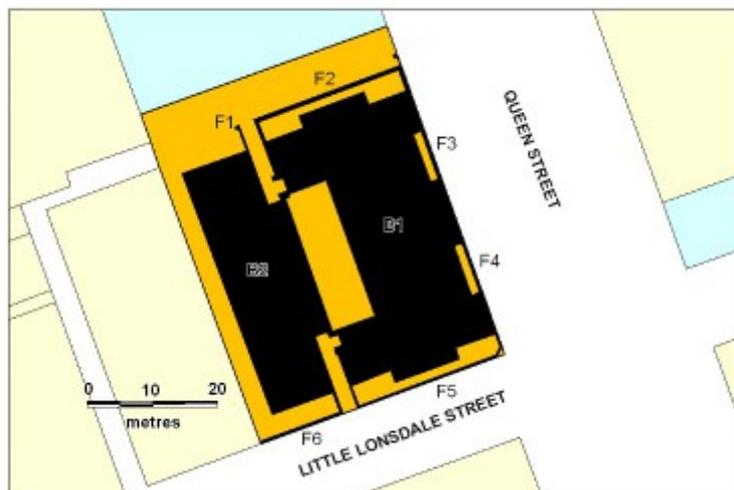
registry of births deaths & marriages  
queen street melbourne side elevation  
feb1985



registry of births deaths & marriages  
queen street melbourne rear courtyard  
feb1985



Registry of Births Deaths & Marriages  
Queens Street Melbourne Rear View  
February 1985



former records office plan

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## Location

287-297 QUEEN STREET MELBOURNE, Melbourne City

## Municipality

MELBOURNE CITY

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H1528

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO733

## VHR Registration

August 20, 1982

## Amendment to Registration

July 12, 2001

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - January 18, 2000

What is significant?

The former Records Office was built in 1900-1904 to the design of SE Bindley, District Architect of the Public Works Department. The contractor was Bartley Dinsmore. It was originally built to house official records including records of births, deaths and marriages, as well as legal records and wills. The building is in the Victorian Second Empire style, a style considered appropriate for a city striving for Parisian grandeur. The main building has a rusticated basement and first floor, a piano nobile with Corinthian columns and pilasters, and an attic storey hidden behind the balustraded parapet. The distinctive Mansard roof is capped with cast iron finials and elaborate zinc griffins. Typical of the style, the main facade has projecting centre and end bays. Internally the main staircase at the Queen Street entrance rises on granite columns through three floors and has marble balustrades to the first floor and cast iron balustrades to the piano nobile. The former Records Office is constructed of stuccoed brick and is joined to a single-storey strong room building at the rear by a courtyard. A caretaker's flat was built over the strong room building in 1938. Fireproof floor construction is used throughout the building, and iron roller shutters on the ground floor and in the strong room.

How is it significant?

The former Records Office is of architectural, historical and scientific (technical) significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The former Records Office is architecturally significant as the last grand statement in the Victorian Second Empire style of a city aspiring to the grandeur of European cities. The Records Office marks the end of the imposing classical style for public buildings in Melbourne and reflects an important development in the design philosophy of Public Works Department architects.

The former Records Office is historically significant for demonstrating the importance of record-keeping in carrying out the functions of Government. Its location near the Titles Office and the law courts illustrates the early relationship between all these arms of Government. The responsibilities of the first Registrar-General of the Colony of Victoria included registering land grants and collecting statistics of births, deaths and marriages. From 1858 the position also became the Registrar of the Supreme Court responsible for the safekeeping of legal documents relating to land transactions and court records. The Records Office originally housed records relating to all these functions of Government.

The former Records Office is scientifically (technically) significant for its use of fire precaution methods. The Traegerwellblech system of fireproof floor construction used throughout the building represents an advance in fireproof flooring techniques first tested in Melbourne in 1881. The system used deep corrugated iron designed to carry substantial loading and was curved into flat arches spanning between girders.

## Permit Exemptions

General Conditions:

1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object.
2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of alterations 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 alteration shall cease and the Executive Director shall be notified as soon as possible.
3. If there is a conservation policy and plan approved by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it.
4. Nothing in this declaration prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.

Nothing in this declaration exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authority where applicable.

\* Minor repairs and maintenance which replace like with like.

Construction dates	1900,
Architect/Designer	Bindley, Samuel Ebden,
Heritage Act Categories	Heritage place,
Other Names	REGISTRY OF BIRTHS DEATHS AND MARRIAGES,
Hermes Number	792
Property Number	

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## History

### Contextual History:

The former Records Office and the Titles Office have always had a close association with each other and with the legal system. The Registrar-General of the Colony of Victoria was charged with the responsibility of registering land grants and collecting statistics of births, deaths and marriages. From 1858 the position also became the Registrar of the Supreme Court with the responsibility for the safekeeping of legal documents relating to land transactions and court records. The Titles Office, first known as the Registrar-General's Office, was constructed at 283 Queen Street in 1874-77, extended in 1884-85 and again in 1887-89. The Records Office was later to occupy the adjacent site.

### HISTORY OF PLACE

The former Records Office was built in 1900-1902 to the design of S E Bindley, District Architect of the Public Works Department. The contractor was Bartley Dinsmore. In 1903 plans for the building were amended to include spaces for a Police Court and a District Court, however it seems these changes never occurred.

The first use of the building was to house the Government Statist and his staff on the ground floor, the Friendly Societies actuary on the ground floor, the Department of Public Health on the first floor, and the analytical laboratories of the Board of Public Health on the second. The basement was used by the Registrar of Land Tax and for the storage of original wills and records of births, deaths and marriages. The two strong rooms stored law records.

The Traegerwellblech system of fireproof floor construction used throughout the building represents an advance in fireproof flooring techniques first tested in Melbourne in 1881. The system used deep corrugated iron designed to carry substantial loading and was curved into flat arches spanning between girders.

The caretaker's residence was built over the strong room building in 1938.

## Assessment Against Criteria

### Criterion A

The historical importance, association with or relationship to Victoria's history of the place or object.

The former Records Office has historical importance for its associations with the significant role of record-keeping in carrying out the functions of Government. Its location near the Titles Office and the law courts illustrates the early relationship between all these arms of Government. The responsibilities of the first Registrar-General of the Colony of Victoria included registering land grants and collecting statistics of births, deaths and marriages. From 1858 the position also became the Registrar of the Supreme Court responsible for the safekeeping of legal documents relating to land transactions and court records. The Records Office originally housed records relating to all these functions of Government.

### Criterion B

The importance of a place or object in demonstrating rarity or uniqueness.

### Criterion C

The place or object's potential to educate, illustrate or provide further scientific investigation in relation to Victoria's cultural heritage.

### Criterion D

The importance of a place or object in exhibiting the principal characteristics or the representative nature of a place or object as part of a class or type of places or objects.

### Criterion E

The importance of the place or object in exhibiting good design or aesthetic characteristics and/or in exhibiting a richness, diversity or unusual integration of features.

The former Records Office exhibits a richness of design features and has aesthetic significance as the last grand statement in the Victorian Second Empire style of a city aspiring to the grandeur of European cities. The Records Office marks the end of the imposing classical style for public buildings in Melbourne and reflects an important development in the design philosophy of Public Works Department architects.

#### Criterion F

The importance of the place or object in demonstrating or being associated with scientific or technical innovations or achievements.

The former Records Office demonstrates technical innovations in fire precaution methods. The Traegerwellblech system of fireproof floor construction used throughout the building represents an advance in fireproof flooring techniques first tested in Melbourne in 1881. The system used deep corrugated iron designed to carry substantial loading and was curved into flat arches spanning between girders.

#### Criterion G

The importance of the place or object in demonstrating social or cultural associations.

#### Criterion H

Any other matter which the Council considers relevant to the determination of cultural heritage significance

### **Extent of Registration**

1. All of the buildings and structures marked B1 (main building), B2 (strong room) and F1 to F6 (bluestone fences with posts and iron railings) on Diagram Number 1528 held by the Executive Director.
2. All of the land shown on Diagram Number 1528 held by the Executive Director being all of the land described in Crown Allotment 8A, Section 30, Parish of Melbourne North.

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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 data owner.*

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