

# FRANCIS ORMOND BUILDING (RMIT BUILDING 1)



H2157 IMG 1185



Francis Ormond Bldg\_first section\_8 Jan 2008



Francis Ormond Bldg\_Melbourne\_rear view\_8 Jan 2008



Francis Ormond statue\_Melbourne\_8 Jan 2008



Francis Ormond Building plan

## Location

124 - 126 LATROBE STREET MELBOURNE, MELBOURNE CITY

## Municipality

MELBOURNE CITY

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2157

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO982

## VHR Registration

May 8, 2008

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - May 27, 2022

### What is significant?

The Francis Ormond Building originated as Melbourne's Working Men's College, which opened in 1887. The first stage (1885-86), on Bowen Street, was built by J Moore at a cost of £11,000, and housed the main lecture hall (now the council chamber), workshops, classrooms and caretaker's quarters. The design was the result of an 1883 competition won by the architects Percy Oakden (later an honorary director of architectural classes at the Working Men's College), Leonard Terry, and Nahum Barnet. The second stage of the building (1890-92), designed by Oakden Addison and Kemp and costing £13,700, comprised the Latrobe Street wing and the corner tower, and included offices, college council and instructors' rooms, classrooms and laboratories. The idea of a college to improve the education of the working classes was first proposed in 1881 by Francis Ormond (1829-89), a Scottish immigrant who had made a fortune from farming and became a great educational philanthropist. The Working Men's College owed its foundation both to the philanthropy of Ormond, and to the support of the unions. The three men most closely involved with its establishment were Ormond, Charles Pearson, a prominent public intellectual and member of the Victorian Lower House, and W E Murphy, secretary to the Trades Hall Council. F A Campbell was the first Director. An important innovation of the College was the system of certificates which a workman could obtain, with all the classes being held in the evening after their work had finished. The College provided a broad range of subjects, not only a narrow technical education, and classes were open to women as well as men. Following Ormond's death a public subscription raised £1200 for the bronze statue outside the building by the sculptor Percival Ball which was unveiled in June 1897. The Working Men's College became the Melbourne Technical College (1934), then Royal Melbourne Technical College (1954), the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (1960) and is now part of RMIT University (1992), one of Australia's foremost universities, on a greatly expanded campus. The original Working Men's College building was called Building 1 of RMIT, and was renamed the Francis Ormond Building in 1981.

The Frances Ormond Building is an asymmetrical three storey Gothic Revival style building of brick, faced with finely-worked sandstone on the two street elevations, on a bluestone base, with a slate roof and sandstone chimneys. The exuberantly modelled street facades are of rock-faced Barrabool sandstone with smooth-dressed Waurin Ponds stone around the openings. The most prominent feature is the square corner tower with a steeply pitched Second-Empire-inspired roof, with corner pinnacles and elaborate iron cresting on the short roof ridge. The earlier part of the building, on Bowen Street, is less simply decorated than the second stage, which includes the tower and the section along La Trobe Street. The earlier section has less ornate window openings, which lack the tracery, receding orders, hood moulds, and decorative bosses adorning the later section. The storeys are

differentiated by different decorative treatments, and are separated by decorative string courses. There are several picturesque gables, including a steep parapeted gable inset with tracery above the La Trobe Street entrance. The Bowen Street entrance is surmounted by a parapeted balcony with gargoyles at the corners. Many internal features survive, including the stained glass decoration in the tympanum over the Bowen Street entrance, with the foundation date, 1877, the Gothic arched openings throughout and several staircases. The most impressive space is the Council chamber, originally a lecture theatre, which has an impressive timber ceiling and tiered seating. The statue of Ormond outside the Bowen Street entrance is a full-scale bronze figure on a high granite base. The new Melbourne Magistrate's Court built to the east of the college in 1911-13 created Victoria's best northern European medieval revival streetscape.

### **How is it significant?**

The Francis Ormond Building is of architectural and historical significance to the state of Victoria.

### **Why is it significant?**

The Frances Ormond Building is architecturally significant as an exceptional Gothic Revival style educational building, and as a major example of the work of the prominent Melbourne architects Terry & Oakden, Nahum Barnet and the firm of Oakden Addison & Kemp. With the adjacent court buildings it forms part of an outstanding medieval revival streetscape.

The Frances Ormond Building is historically significant for its association with the development of education beyond primary level for the working classes in Victoria in the late nineteenth century. It is significant as a monument to its founder Francis Ormond, one of Victoria's outstanding nineteenth century philanthropists, reinforced by the statue of Ormond erected nearby. It is significant as the earliest part of what has become one of Victoria's most important educational institutions. It is significant as a demonstration of the commitment of working men and women to their self-improvement, with over eleven thousand individuals having contributed to the public fund established in the early 1880s for the construction of the first stage of the building.

## **Permit Exemptions**

### **General Exemptions:**

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must [notify](#) the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

### **Specific 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. General Conditions: 2. Should it become apparent during

further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible. Note: All archaeological places have the potential to contain significant sub-surface artefacts and other remains. In most cases it will be necessary to obtain approval from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria before the undertaking any works that have a significant sub-surface component. General Conditions: 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan endorsed by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it. Note: The existence of a Conservation Management Plan or a Heritage Action Plan endorsed by the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria provides guidance for the management of the heritage values associated with the site. It may not be necessary to obtain a heritage permit for certain works specified in the management plan. General Conditions: 4. Nothing in this determination prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions. General Conditions: 5. Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authorities where applicable.

Regular Site Maintenance : The following site maintenance works are permit exempt under section 66 of the Heritage Act 1995: a) regular site maintenance provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground features or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits; b) the maintenance of an item to retain its conditions or operation without the removal of or damage to the existing fabric or the introduction of new materials; c) cleaning including the removal of surface deposits, organic growths, or graffiti by the use of low pressure water and natural detergents and mild brushing and scrubbing; d) repairs, conservation and maintenance to plaques, memorials, roads and paths, fences and gates and drainage and irrigation. e) the replacement of existing services such as cabling, plumbing, wiring and fire services that uses existing routes, conduits or voids, and does not involve damage to or the removal of significant fabric. Note: Surface patina which has developed on the fabric may be an important part of the item's significance and if so needs to be preserved during maintenance and cleaning. Note: Any new materials used for repair must not exacerbate the decay of existing fabric due to chemical incompatibility, obscure existing fabric or limit access to existing fabric for future maintenance. Repair must maximise protection and retention of fabric and include the conservation of existing details or elements.

Public Safety and Security : The following public safety and security activities are permit exempt under section 66 of the Heritage Act 1995, a) public safety and security activities provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground structures or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits; b) the erection of temporary security fencing, scaffolding, hoardings or surveillance systems to prevent unauthorised access or secure public safety which will not adversely affect significant fabric of the place including archaeological features; c) development including emergency stabilisation necessary to secure safety where a site feature has been irreparably damaged or destabilised and represents a safety risk to its users or the public. Note: Urgent or emergency site works are to be undertaken by an appropriately qualified specialist such as a structural engineer, or other heritage professional.

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

Construction dates	1885, 1890,
Architect/Designer	Barnet, Nahum, Terry & Oakden, Oakden, Addison & Kemp,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Other Names	FORMER WORKING MENS COLLEGE, FRANCIS ORMOND BUILDING, RMIT Building 1,
Hermes Number	3011
Property Number	

## History

Associated People: Assoc.People FRANCIS ORMOND  
Assoc.People FRANCIS ORMOND

## Plaque Citation

Instigated by the philanthropist Francis Ormond, this was Melbourne's first working men's college, built in 1885-6 to designs by Terry & Oakden and Nahum Barnet and extended in 1890-2 by Oakden Addison & Kemp.

## Assessment Against Criteria

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

The Frances Ormond Building is historically significant for its association with the development of education beyond primary level for the working classes in Victoria in the late nineteenth century. It is a monument to its founder Francis Ormond, one of Victoria's outstanding nineteenth century citizens and philanthropists, an association which is reinforced by the statue of Ormond located nearby. The building is the earliest part of what has become one of Victoria's most important educational institutions. It demonstrates the commitment of working men and women to their self- improvement at a time when formal education beyond primary level was not available to the working classes, with over eleven thousand individuals having contributed to the public fund established in the early 1880s for the construction of the first stage of the building.

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

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

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

The Frances Ormond Building is an exceptional example of a large educational building in a Gothic Revival style. It is a major example of the work of the prominent Melbourne architects Terry & Oakden, Nahum Barnet and the firm of Oakden Addison & Kemp.

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 Francis Ormond Building is a fine example of the institutional Gothic Revival style. Together with the adjacent court buildings it forms part of an outstanding medieval revival streetscape.

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

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

h. Any other matter which the Council deems relevant to the determination of cultural heritage significance

## Extent of Registration

1. All the land marked L1 on Diagram 2157 held by the Executive Director, being part of the land described in Certificate of Title Volume 03791 Folio 070, and part of the land described in Certificate of Title Volume 10294 Folio 797.

2. All the building marked B1 on Diagram 2157 held by the Executive Director.

3. The statue marked F1 on Diagram 2157 held by the Executive Director.

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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/>*