

# TRADES HALL



TRADES HALL SOHE 2008



1 trades hall lygon street  
carlton front view jul1987



trades hall lygon street  
carlton detail of entrance



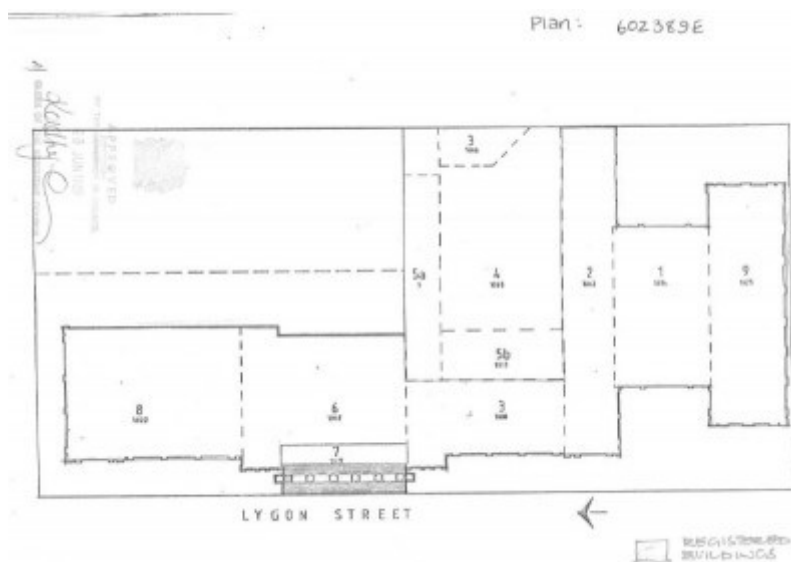
trades hall lygon street  
carlton cast iron frieze



trades hall lygon street  
carlton balcony



trades-hall-1916.jpg



H0663 trades hall extent 1991

## Location

2-40 LYGON STREET, CARLTON, MELBOURNE CITY

## Municipality

MELBOURNE CITY

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H0663

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO68

## VHR Registration

July 26, 1989

## Amendment to Registration

September 11, 1991

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - January 20, 2023

### What is significant?

Trades Hall was constructed in some ten stages, the most significant period of building being that between 1874 and 1925. It was during this period that the imposing classical facade to Lygon and Victoria Streets was established. Trades Hall is largely a two storey building, with bluestone foundations and brick walls with unpainted cement render finish. The facade is articulated primarily by the use of Corinthian pilasters. An entrance portico in Lygon Street features eight Corinthian columns supporting a triangular pediment between two flanking towers. The Victoria Street wing features large parapet urns. This early phase of construction was built to the design of architectural firm Reed and Barnes and its later derivatives. Later additions, such as the 1960s office building to the rear, are not sympathetic to the original style.

### How is it significant?

Trades Hall is of historical, social and architectural significance to the State of Victoria.

### Why is it significant?

Trades Hall is of historical significance for its associations with trade union, Labor Party, and State and Australian history. The existing building occupies the site where the first, temporary Trades Hall was opened in May 1859. Since its construction, the building has been the site of numerous important events in union and working class history. Its origins lie in the successful eight hours day movement, in which Victorian artisans led the world, and has long been regarded as a splendid monument to this achievement. In addition, the building has significant associations with the development of Victoria's trade unions, numerous unions having had their headquarters in the building, and with the early history of the Australian Council of Trade Unions, hosting the first meeting of the ACTU in May 1927. As Australia's oldest and largest Trades Hall, it stands as a symbol of the importance of organised labour within Australian society. Its relatively intact interior and exterior provide an evocative testament to the living traditions of the Australian Labor movement. In particular, flags, banners and honour boards (including one commemorating the leaders of the eight hours movement) are significant artefacts tracing more

than a century of union history, and are important historical records in their own right. Trades Hall's role in Australia's political history is also significant. In particular, activities leading to the birth of the Labor Party and support of the great industrial campaigns of the 1890s took place here. The direct connection with the ALP was maintained for almost 100 years, the Victorian headquarters of the Party being based in Trades Hall until 1972. Trades Hall also provided facilities to support the Berry Liberal faction of protectionist politicians in the 1870s. This was a tumultuous time in Victorian politics, with Berry and his supporters trying to push through upper house reform introduce payments for MPs and implement high tariffs and land taxes, all policies which resonated within the walls of Trades Hall.

Trades Hall is of social significance as a centre of radical and working class politics and activism in Victoria for over 100 years. Major campaigns and struggles that have had important ramifications for Victorian and Australian society have been coordinated from Trades Hall, and the building continues to serve as a focus of union organisation and left-wing political activity.

Trades Hall is of architectural significance as a fine surviving example of a large 19th century institutional building, and for its associations with Joseph Reed. It was designed as a combined Trades Hall and literary institute by the firm of Reed and Barnes and its later derivatives. Its conservative style reflects the aspirations towards social respectability of the early Trades Hall leadership. It is a rare example of a building constructed in stages over a long period from 1873-1926, which remains consistent with its original 1870s style. It is an outstanding example of 19th century craftsmanship, with architectural records showing that its builders prided themselves on using the best of local materials and building skills. This pride reflected the major role played by Victoria's building unions in securing the site and the finance, and in planning and carrying out the construction of the Trades Hall building. The complex is an important Melbourne landmark and a dominating and significant feature in the Lygon Street streetscape. The building's architects, Reed and Barnes, were very influential establishment architects who designed many of Victoria's most notable public buildings. Joseph Reed (1823-1890), who founded the Reed and Barnes practice, was one of the most important architects in the history of Melbourne. Over a long working life he was a major figure during one of Melbourne's most vigorous periods of growth- the 1870s and 1880s. He won numerous competitions and was responsible for a large number of important public and private buildings in various styles, including the Public Library in Swanston Street, most of the University of Melbourne's 19th century buildings, Rippon Lea, Melbourne Town Hall and the Exhibition Building. His was the first major private architectural practice in Melbourne, and its successors have continued to contribute to Melbourne's architectural richness ever since.

## 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:

Pursuant to Section 66(1) of the Heritage Act (1995) and in respect to the above-registered place / object, the Executive Director hereby DECLARES EXEMPT THE OWNERS NEED TO OBTAIN A PERMIT TO CARRY OUT ANY OF THE FOLLOWING CLASSES OF WORKS OR ACTIVITIES, SUBJECT TO ANY CONDITIONS PRESCRIBED HEREUNDER:

Banners may be hung from the Lygon Street elevation at the south end provided they are attached to the current fixings. New fixings would require a permit.

The banner must be for the purposes of advertising:

- . products of the Trade Union Movement
- . material regarding political and industrial campaigns
- . arts/community events being held within the building

Construction dates	1873,
Architect/Designer	Reed & Barnes,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Other Names	MELBOURNE TRADES HALL,
Hermes Number	224
Property Number	

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## History

Contextual History:History of Place:

Source: Register of the National Estate.

This site is crown land, permanently reserved as a site for a Trades Hall and Literary Institute. The Melbourne Trades Hall complex stands on the historic site where the first temporary Trades Hall was opened in May 1859. John Jude was the original contractor and the complex was constructed in stages between 1873 and 1926 from the designs of the architectural firm Reed and Barnes and its later derivatives. The first 1873 building was a solid, squarish two storey building, facing south towards Victoria Street. In 1882 a long, narrow building was added behind the first, extending beyond it on either side. In 1888 a further extension northward along Lygon Street was continued in the grander style with a tower. It seems likely that at about this time a master scheme had been developed to include a new main entrance fronting Lygon Street and this section formed an early part of it. This development continued northward in stages until 1922; finally, in 1926, the south end, very much an afterthought in compositional terms, was added. Today the whole development appears as a consistent design approach maintained by the Trades Hall and its architects since Joseph Reed (of Reed and Barnes) first conceived the principal concept.

Trades Hall is the oldest Trades Hall Building in Australia.  
Associated People:

## Extent of Registration

### AMENDMENT OF REGISTER OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Historic Building No. 781.

Trades Hall, North-Eastern corner of Victoria and Lygon Streets, Carlton

Extent:

1. The buildings known as the Trades Hall, with the exception of 5b and the new office block at the time of registration as shown on attached plan (labelled 602389E); and
2. The whole of the land described in Certificates of Title Volume 1785 Folio 969 and Volume 2031 Folio 016.  
[Victoria Government Gazette No. G35 11 September 1991 p.2547]

*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/>*