

# FORMER BANK OF AUSTRALASIA



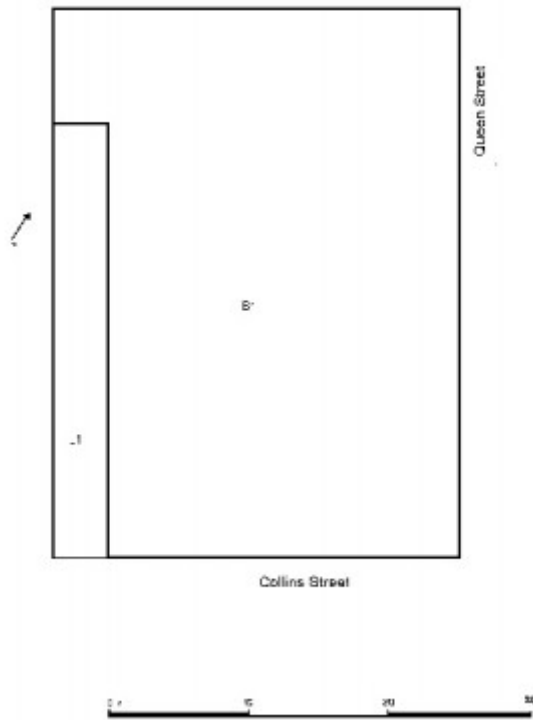
ANZ BANK SOHE 2008



bank of australasia collins street melbourne front elevation feb1986



bank of australasia collins street melbourne front corner view jul1980



bank of australasia melbourne plan

## Location

394-398 COLLINS STREET AND 73-83 QUEEN STREET MELBOURNE, MELBOURNE CITY

## Municipality

MELBOURNE CITY

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H0033

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO606

## VHR Registration

October 9, 1974

## Amendment to Registration

February 10, 2000

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

---

## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - June 6, 2000

What is significant?

The Bank of Australasia was founded in Sydney in 1835. It quickly opened branches in Hobart and Launceston, and then in Melbourne in 1838. Due to vigorous growth in the Melbourne economy, especially during the 1850s, it was decided that the Australian headquarters of the bank would be located in the prospering town. A prominent corner site in the centre of Melbourne's banking district was purchased in 1858 and a building was constructed in 1876. The Bank of Australasia had early associations with small indigenous banks seeing itself primarily as a support for pioneers. It was a conservatively run bank that managed to weather the financial collapses of the 1890s and the 1930s.

The history of this building is dominated by the fact that it was designed in two stages by two different architects. The architects for the first stage, Reeds & Barnes, designed a restrained two storey Classical building, constructed of imported Omaru stone, with a rusticated base, a prominent cornice and grouped corner pilasters. The architects for the second stage of the building, in 1929, were A & K Henderson. Three stories were added which matched the original building in both external style and materials. To externally continue the classical style established with the original building, the third storey was given a very prominent cornice, the fourth level was conceived of as an attic level and the fifth was set well back. The interior was completely reconstructed. A mezzanine level was added within the ground floor banking chamber with ornate metal balustrades and a light well was built through the centre of the building culminating in a glazed sky light over the banking chamber. On the first floor the boardroom was positioned to overlook the light well. The interior plaster decoration was continued in the original Renaissance Revival flavour. From the 1970s the light well was filled in and intermediate levels added between floors three and four, and also between the first and second floor. The ANZ Bank sold the building in 1974, ending 98 years of occupancy.

How is it significant?

The former Bank of Australasia, 394 ? 398 Collins Street Melbourne, is of architectural and historical significance

to the state of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The former Bank of Australasia is of architectural significance as an example of conservative Renaissance Revival design. The 1876 design is significant for its successful manipulation of classical elements to a corner location. The use of superimposed trabeated architectural systems and the groupings of pilasters at the corners of the building enable the impression of a classical three dimensional presence, while only actually decorating two faces. The early building is also significant for its use of imported stone from New Zealand, demonstrating the resources available and the ties the bank had in the 1870s. The 1929 additions are significant as an example of building expansion during the depression era, when it was common to add more storeys to a building instead of total reconstruction. These additions are also significant as a skilful solution to the problem of adding levels to an already complete classically based design. The former bank of Australasia is significant as an example of conservative design expression representing a conservative bank, in a period when more modern designs were going up all over the city.

The former Bank of Australasia is of historical significance as the headquarters of a major banking company within Australia from 1876 to 1974. It is significant for its position on a corner site within the centre of the banking precinct in Melbourne, which was the most important business centre at the time in Australia due to its growth and wealth. The Bank of Australasia is of historical significance for its conservative nature, which is reflected in both the original facades and the 1920s additions. In this period the architectural expression of the bank served as a metaphor for the impression the company wanted sent out to the community. In this case it was images of solidity and confidence. The existing interior layout of the banking chamber, the vaults, the board room and the managers office are of historical significance as they reflect the operations and hierarchy of a major banking headquarters. The 1929 boardroom, in particular, is illustrative of the banking business culture during the 1930s. It is significant as a rare example of a surviving boardroom from a banking headquarters of that period.

## 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.

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.
5. 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.

#### Exterior

1. Minor repairs and maintenance which replace like with like.
2. Removal of any extraneous items such as air conditioners, pipe work, ducting, wiring, antennae, aerials etc, and making good.

#### Interior

1. Works to interiors of units or access corridors above ground floors apart from areas connecting with the first floor board room, which so not affect the external appearance of the building.

Construction dates	1876,
Architect/Designer	Reed & Barnes,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Other Names	BANK OF AUSTRALASIA, ANZ BANK, THE SEBEL MELBOURNE,
Hermes Number	734
Property Number	

## History

### Contextual History:

The first branch of the Bank of Australasia opened in Sydney in 1835, quickly followed by branches opening in Hobart and Launceston. In 1838 a branch was opened in Melbourne, and due to the huge stimulation in the economy because of the growth of the wool trade, and later gold, it was not long before it was decided to move the head office. A site was purchased in Collins Street Melbourne in 1858 for this purpose, however a building was not constructed until 1876. The Bank of Australasia had much of its early associations with small colonial banks and initially saw itself primarily as a support for pioneers. The management was very conservative which ensured its survival during the financial collapse of the late 1880s, as they had kept enough of their assets in liquid form. In the 1920s the Bank of Australasia began to call itself the oldest bank in Australia on the basis that it was unaltered from the way it had been originally constituted. The Bank of Australasia also had no problems riding out the financial problems of the depression in the 1930s, but suffered instead throughout that period from a more public backlash regarding its close association with Britain. There was a strong feeling amongst the community that banks were serving the interests of the British monied class. [primary refererce used is 'ANZ Bank: An Official History', David Merrett, Allen & Unwin Sydney 1985 p. 1 - 14]

In 1951 the bank merged with the Union Bank of Australia Ltd and formed the Australia & New Zealand Bank Ltd.

### History of Place:

The former Bank of Australasia, in Collins Street Melbourne, was constructed by Reed & Barnes in 1876 as the headquarters of the corporation. It was initially a two-storey building designed in a classical revival style with high arched windows and attached columns. The building was constructed of imported Omaru stone from New Zealand and was built on a prominent corner position in the centre of Melbourne's business district. In 1929-30 renovations took place. It was a common occurrence during the depression years to renovate city buildings when more space was required, rather than rebuild them from scratch. An additional three floors were added by the architects A & K Henderson. Henderson had been employed by Reed & Barnes when the building

had been originally constructed, [Notes for 394 Collins Street hearing 24/11/98. Officer reporting Peter Mills] so the renovations were undertaken to match the original building in both external style and materials. The top three floors were built each with a slightly decreased floor area as they got higher, creating a pyramid effect. This was done as a solution to the complicated architectural problem of adding additional levels to an already completed Classical design. In order to externally continue the classical style established with the original building, the third storey was given a very prominent cornice, the fourth level was conceived of as an attic level and the fifth was set back further. The interior of the original two floors was totally reconstructed in keeping with the original style, with a large elaborate banking chamber being created on the ground level and the boardroom designed on the second level. [Submission to the Heritage Council produced for the Walker Corporation by Allom Lovell & Associates. Nov 1998 p. 1] The banking chamber is a very good example of the twentieth century renaissance inspired interior, with its coffered plaster ceilings, grand columns and stone and bronze decorative elements. [Permit Appeals Hearing Information 24th November 1998, p. 4 (from file)]

In 1960 further renovations took place and an intermediate floor between levels three and four was added within the building. This floor can be seen from the outside bisecting the windows on the Queens Street facade of the building. In 1974 the ANZ Bank sold the building to the General Accident Fire and Life Assurance Corporation, and in 1997 it was sold once again to the Walker Corporation.

The registration for this building was originally for the entire structure, but has since been reduced to certain aspects, including the board room, the basement, which was used as an air raid shelter, and the south lifts to all floors.

Originally the boardroom faced onto a central light court that ran the entire height of the building, therefore allowing for and relying on natural light. In 1980 - 82 works took place that closed off the light court and separated it from the boardroom, but retained the original steel doors that had connected it. Diffused electric lighting was introduced in place of the natural light.

Associated People:

## **Assessment Against Criteria**

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

This building was constructed during the beginning of a boom growth within Victoria and the development of grand and imposing banking institutions was a sign of the growing confidence within the community after the gold rush period. As the headquarters for the Bank of Australasia, this building is significant. It was important as a landmark for this growing institution that proved to be a successful bank in its own right, and now shares the history of the ANZ Bank, which it formed when it merged with the Union Bank in 1951.

The Bank of Australasia was, by the 1920s calling itself Australia's oldest bank and prided itself on its background of supporting Australian pioneers.

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

This building contains one of the few surviving boardrooms from 1930, and the only boardroom in a registered building of a banking institution. While alterations have taken place to the light court which faced the boardroom, thus changing slightly the feel of the room, the condition of the room itself is good and is relatively intact. This room can continue to be very illustrative of 1930s business culture.

The ground floor banking chamber, especially the banking counters and the high ceiling, are illustrative of the grand scale of banking within Victoria in the early 1880s and the importance that was placed in the imposing appearance for the public.

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 grand scale of the classical design was typical for banking institutions at the time and demonstrates the attempt by the bank to convey the impression of 'long standing', 'confidence', 'solidity' and 'conservatism'. Most of the advertising banks were able to use in the period came from what the public, its clients, were able to glean from the solid exterior appearance of the building, and the grand imposing appearance within the banking chamber.

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 classical design itself is significant as a good example of the style and its use of superimposed trabeated architectural systems. The use of the groupings of pilasters at the corners of the building is an unusual way of expressing the buildings three dimensional characteristics.

The renovation and new floors that were added in 1929 are designed in sympathy the original structure, both within and without. The fact that the top added floors are set back from the original facade serves to lessen the visual impact to the original structure.

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

The intact existence of the boardroom, the banking chamber and the vaults create significance for the buildings historic use as the headquarters of the Bank of Australasia. It demonstrates the heirarchy of the banking organisation and how the building was used. The boardroom, built in 1929, is relatively intact and is illustrative of the banking business culture during the 1930s.

## **Extent of Registration**

### **NOTICE OF REGISTRATION**

As Executive Director for the purpose of the Heritage Act, I give notice under section 46 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended in that the Heritage Register Number 33 in the category described as a Heritage Place is now described as:

ANZ Bank, 394-398 Collins Street and 78-83 Queen Street, Melbourne, Melbourne City Council.

#### **EXTENT:**

1. All of the exterior fabric of the building marked B1 on Diagram 603264 held by the Executive Director, Heritage Council, including the interior to the extent of the brick vaulted section of the basement (including the access corridor to those vaults) the total ground and mezzanine floors, the former first floor boardroom, the southern stairwell on all floors (excluding those walls of the liftwells which do not form part of the southern stairwell and the lift doors in floors 1 to 6).

2. All the land marked L1 on Diagram 603264 held by the Executive Director, Heritage Council, being all the land described in Certificate of Title Volume 10200, Folio 262.

Dated: 3 February 2000

RAY TONKIN  
Executive Director

[*Victoria Government Gazette* G 6 10 February 2000 pp.221-222]

---

*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/>*