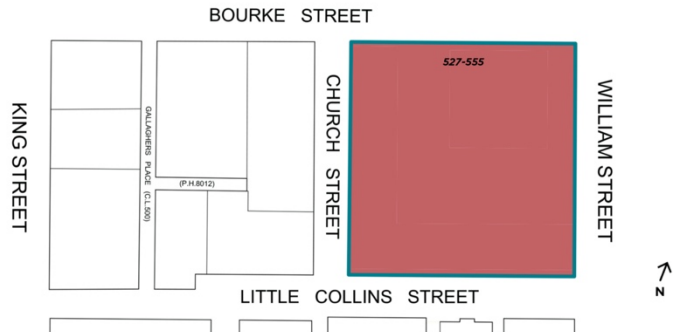


**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: AMP Tower and St James Building Complex (527-555 Bourke Street, Melbourne), April 2022**

**Heritage Place:** AMP Tower and St James Building Complex

**PS ref no:** HO1310





### What is significant?

AMP Tower and St James Building Complex, 527-555 Bourke Street, a multi-storey office building and plaza complex constructed in 1965-69.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The original external form, materials and detailing of both buildings
- The high level of integrity to the original design of both buildings
- The form of the public plaza.

Later alterations made to the street level facades of both buildings and the roof-top addition to the St James Building are not significant. The garden beds, ramped walkways and in-built furniture within the plaza are not significant.

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

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The AMP Tower and St James Building Complex at 527-555 Bourke Street is of historical, rarity, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Melbourne.

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

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As the third headquarters constructed for the Australian Mutual Provident Society in Melbourne, the AMP Tower and St James Building Complex has a clear association with the history of the life insurance industry in Melbourne. Established in 1849, the Australian Mutual Provident Society pioneered life insurance in Australia and by the 1880s was a well-regarded and highly successful national life insurance provider. The scale and complexity of the design, the quality of the work, and the commissioning of successful American architects to lead the project clearly demonstrates the success and growth of the AMP Society in Melbourne in the twentieth century (Criterion A).

Constructed in 1965-69 to a design by Skidmore Owings & Merrill in association with Bates Smart & McCutcheon, the AMP Tower and St James Building Complex has a clear association with the postwar building boom which transformed central Melbourne into a modern high-rise city. The design of these commercial buildings from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s – many of which were architect designed – was driven by the commercial demands and the prestige afforded by a dominant city presence (Criterion A).

The AMP Tower and St James Building are fine and intact representative examples of Post-War Modernist commercial buildings. Lead design by American architects Skidmore Owings & Merrill, the buildings strongly reflect the style which was popular in the 1960s to the mid-1970s, particularly in central Melbourne. Constructed as a 26-storey office tower on a prominent corner site, the freestanding AMP Tower clearly demonstrates typical characteristics of a 1960s to mid-1970s structure, including four identical grid-like walls formed from dominant vertical piers and repetitive square window and spandrel units, a podium base and deep crowning cornice, and the use of materials such as reconstructed granite-faced precast concrete panels, bronze-tinted glazing and anodised aluminium window frames. Utilising the same materials, the sloping and angled grid-like walls of the low-rise St James Building similarly demonstrate typical characteristics of a grid-like 1960s to mid-1970s structure. Despite alterations and additions made to the two buildings, the AMP

Tower and St James Building clearly demonstrates the principal characteristics of a postwar multi-storey commercial complex (Criterion D).

The AMP Tower and St James Building Complex is a well-considered and carefully detailed example of a designed urban space in the Melbourne CBD. Widely discussed and illustrated in contemporary architectural journals during and after construction, the site – with prominent corner tower, L-shaped building which encloses the site and associated public plaza – presents as a well-designed and now rare urban space in the CBD. Despite alterations, including the removal of the original Clement Meadmore sculpture 'Awakening' from the plaza, the overall form of the original 1960s urban space can be understood and appreciated (Criterion B & Criterion E).

#### **Primary source**

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Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020) (updated March 2022)