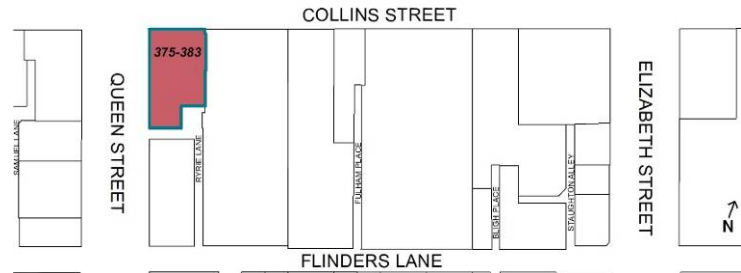


STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: Former Legal and General House (375-383 Collins Street, Melbourne), April 2022

Heritage Place: Former Legal & General House



PS ref no: HO1323



What is significant?

The former Legal & General House at 375-383 Collins Street, Melbourne, built 1967.

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

- The building's original form and scale
- Original modular composition of façades comprising precast concrete panels with inset windows

- Original external materials including mosaic tiles, glazing, remaining fabric of the original colonnade
- 'Floating' roof slab supported by columns.

Later alterations, particularly at street level, are not significant.

How it is significant?

The former Legal & General House at 375-383 Collins Street is of historic, representative, aesthetic and technical significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

The former Legal & General House is historically significant for the evidence it provides of Melbourne's postwar development and rapid growth of corporate architecture. Constructed in 1967 to a design by architects Bernard Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking, the building demonstrates the pattern in 1950s-70s' Melbourne of increased economic activity that facilitated the construction of new bank buildings and headquarters of national and international companies and corporations. Many of these companies were banking, insurance and assurance related. In Melbourne this activity was concentrated west of Elizabeth Street in Queen and Collins streets from the late nineteenth century. Legal & General House is located within this precinct, occupying the site of the earlier 1887 Prell's Buildings. The Prell's Buildings were occupied by commercial agencies including North British & Mercantile Insurance, and the Australian Provincial Assurance Association and were owned by Legal & General Assurance Society from 1954. (Criterion A)

The former Legal & General House is significant as a highly intact example of a Post-War Modernist style commercial building in central Melbourne. The building exhibits key characteristics of the style, including concrete post and slab construction, a non-loadbearing precast concrete panel façade with a repetitive modular geometry, and a double height street level undercroft and colonnade. Although the undercroft and colonnade have been altered in part, and are partially obscured, original fabric remains which enables the original building form and style at ground level to be appreciated. The former Legal & General House is also representative of the early wave of high-rise commercial buildings constructed following the abolition of the 40-metre (132-foot) height limit for buildings in the city centre. (Criterion D)

The former Legal & General House is significant for the retention of fine original detailing, including original mosaic-tiled wall surfaces, and copper tinted glazing which was noted at the time of its completion as creating a coppery glow to the façade. The glazing was also noted at the time as innovative, designed for sun and glare protection. The building's height and the aesthetic effect of the glazing were key factors contributing to the building's distinctive aesthetic prominence in Melbourne's changing skyline. (Criteria E and F)

Primary source

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