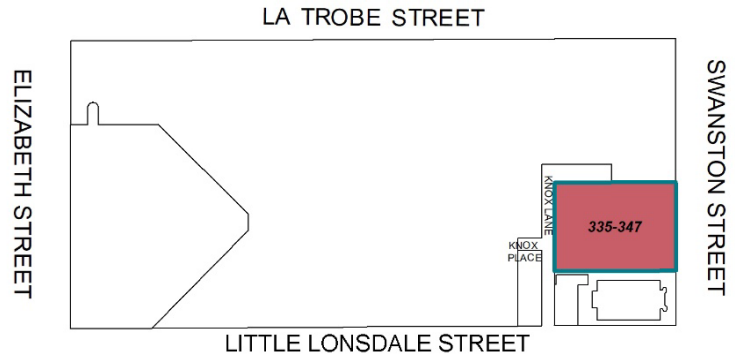


**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: Former Manchester Unity Oddfellows Building Statement of Significance (335-347 Swanston Street, Melbourne), April 2022**

**Heritage Place:** Former Manchester Unity Oddfellows Building

**PS ref no:** HO1376



**What is significant?**

Former Manchester Unity Oddfellows Building at 335-347 Swanston Street, Melbourne, a 15-storey (three levels added in 1996-96) interwar Functionalist style office building built in 1940-41 to a design by architect Marcus Barlow.

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

- The original built form and scale
- The original pattern of fenestration, including 'streamlined' horizontal spandrels, extensive horizontal bands of glazing and contrasting asymmetric vertical stair element
- The original multipane steel frame windows.

Later alterations made to the street level façade, and the additional storeys constructed in 1997, are not significant.

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

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335-347 Swanston Street, Melbourne is of local historical, representative, aesthetic and associative significance to the City of Melbourne.

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

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The building at 335-347 Swanston Street is historically significant for the evidence it provides of the importance of welfare provision in Melbourne. The building was constructed for the Manchester Unity Independent Order of Oddfellows to the design of architect Marcus Barlow in 1940-41. The site on which it stands has a longer association with the Manchester Unity Independent Order of Oddfellows, who first provided welfare to Melburnians at the site from 1863 continuing until 1946. The 1940-41 building had a mix of uses, incorporating a large hall and rooms for the use of the society, and factory space and shops available for lease. Compulsorily acquired by the Commonwealth government for use by the Department of Munitions in 1946, the building is also significant for its connection with the history of Commonwealth acquisition of land and buildings in Melbourne for use in association with military and defence, during and as a consequence of war. (Criterion A)

The former Manchester Unity Oddfellows building at 335-347 Swanston Street is significant as a largely intact example of commercial development in central Melbourne. It demonstrates the 40 metre (132 foot) height limit then in force during the period when the city had recovered from the Great Depression but World War Two imposed constraints on new buildings. The interwar Functionalist style was popular during the interwar and early postwar periods, usually for low rise industrial buildings, schools and institutional buildings. However, there were a number of commercial developments in central Melbourne that utilised the style for its modern or progressive aesthetic, including the building at 335-347 Swanston Street. The building at 335-347 Swanston Street exhibits the same design aesthetic and quality as other examples of the style. The building has a high degree of integrity, retaining its 'streamlined' horizontal spandrels, extensive horizontal bands of glazing and contrasting asymmetric vertical stair element that characterise the style. (Criterion D)

The former Manchester Unity Oddfellows building is of aesthetic significance as a substantial commercial building built in the interwar Functionalist style. Built to a design by architect Marcus Barlow, the building is distinguished as a pure example of the style, without the decorative articulation that derives from earlier styles. Barlow was a strong advocate of skyscrapers and American urbanism, the aesthetic influence of which can be observed in his design for the subject building. (Criterion E)

The site at 335-347 Swanson Street was long associated with the Manchester Unity Independent Order of Oddfellows (MUIOOF), a friendly society founded in Manchester, England, in 1810, for the purpose of providing financial and social assistance to members experiencing hardship. The first meeting of the Australia Felix Lodge of the MUIOOF was held in Melbourne in 1840. The society subsequently built a hall on part of the subject site c1863, which it occupied for 80 years. After constructing the new 12 storey premises on the site in 1940-41, the MUIOOF remained at today's

335-347 Swanston Street until the building was forcibly acquired by the Commonwealth in 1946 for military needs. The building's subsequent occupation by the Commonwealth Government is also significant for its connection to defence history and the requisition of land and buildings by the Commonwealth in World War Two. (Criterion H)

**Primary source**

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