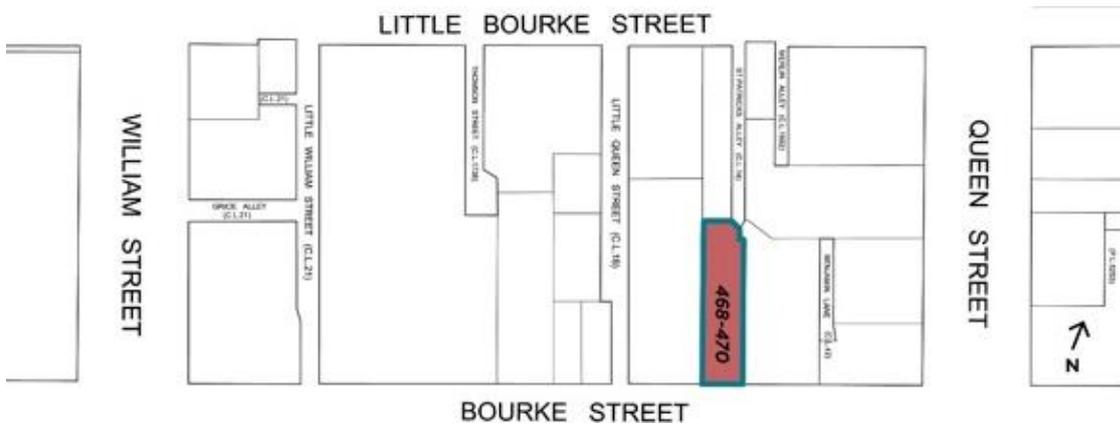


SITE NAME	Former London Assurance House [also known as Law Institute of Victoria]
STREET ADDRESS	468-470 Bourke Street, Melbourne
PROPERTY ID	101181



SURVEY DATE: May 2017		SURVEY BY: Context	
HERITAGE INVENTORY	No	EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY	Yes – interim controls HO1006
PLACE TYPE	Individual Heritage Place	PROPOSED CATEGORY	Significant
DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:	Bernard Evans	FORMER GRADE	B
		BUILDER:	Not known
DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:	Postwar Period (1945-1965)	DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:	1960

THEMES

ABORIGINAL THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations.	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here
POSTWAR THEMES	DOMINANT SUB-THEMES
1 Shaping the urban landscape	1.8 Expressing an architectural style
3 Building a commercial city	3.2 Business and finance

LAND USE

THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE	
1890s	St Patrick’s Hall
1920s	St Patrick’s Hall
1960s	Office (insurance)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Extent of overlay: Refer to map

SUMMARY

The former London Assurance House at 468-470 Bourke Street, now the Law Institute of Australia, is a postwar curtain wall office building completed in 1960. It occupies the site of the former St Patrick’s Hall which housed the first sitting of the Victorian Parliament in 1851.

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

The period from 1945 to 1975 was one of radical transformation for Melbourne; from the low-rise city that still reflected its colonial origins to a bustling international centre of commerce and culture. The surviving buildings from this period are evidence of the evolving economic and social conditions in Melbourne at the time and demonstrate the city's transition from its nineteenth century manufacturing origins to its current banking, office and service industry focus. These buildings reflect the increasing commercial and cultural role of Melbourne in the international context of globalisation and postwar optimism as well as a radically altered economic environment which saw an influx of foreign capital and ideas. Collectively, these buildings represent a transformative period in the life of the city; a period that is categorised by significant change, growth and evolution across all aspects of life – social, political, economic and cultural.

Expressing an architectural style in the postwar period

Multi-storey commercial buildings made a significant contribution to postwar Melbourne, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s. With the resumption of building construction in the 1950s after the hiatus of World War II, the advent of curtain wall construction – enabling the application of a non-load bearing skin to the face of a building – radically altered the appearance of the modern city commercial building.

Constructed predominantly for the financial and business sectors, there was an eagerness amongst clients to establish a dominant city presence and to project a modern, progressive and prestigious approach to commercial building design. The resulting Post-War Modernist style of multi-storey buildings, influenced particularly by steel and glass office tower design in the United States, were in stark contrast to the pre-war city buildings in central Melbourne and presented architects of the day with a completely new design challenge.

Thirty major city buildings were completed in Melbourne in four years alone from 1955 to 1958 and 22 were office buildings within, or on the fringes of, the CBD (Saunders 1959:91). Largely influenced by the American skyscraper, the earliest office buildings of the 1950s utilised innovative curtain walling, formed from continuous metal-framing filled principally with glass. The curtain wall is described by Miles Lewis as 'essentially a continuous, non-bearing skin on the face of a building' and is one of the 'leitmotifs of modernism, both in Australia and overseas' (Lewis 2012:185). The curtain walled 'glass box' aesthetic was embraced by the local architects, and many buildings followed to the extent that high-rise office buildings with curtain walling became a defining characteristic of the new buildings in the latter half of the 1950s (NTAV 2014:5-6).

Amongst the first curtain walled buildings to be constructed in Melbourne was the 13-storey glass-fronted Gilbert Court at 100 Collins Street (J A La Gerche 1954-56), which was built to the height limit of 132 feet (40m), and – perhaps the most influential – the free-standing ICI House, 1 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1955-58). Located on the outskirts of the Hoddle Grid, ICI House was clad on all four facades with glass curtain walling and exceeded the well-established maximum building height within the Hoddle Grid. Large numbers of similarly designed city commercial buildings followed, often displaying bold horizontal contrast between alternating rows of glazing and coloured spandrels.

Business and finance in the postwar period

The postwar period was one of fluctuating fortunes in the business and finance sectors. In the main however, economic confidence and financial deregulation came together to create a period of growth that would radically change the appearance of central Melbourne.

Speculative investment in Melbourne increased after the Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on share dealings in 1947, which resulted in a dramatic increase in new company registrations (Marsden 2000:44-45). Subsequently, during the 1950s, a number of national and international companies sought to assert a physical presence in the country, constructing corporate buildings in the city centre. In Melbourne, up to the mid-1960s, investment was predominantly driven by British and American companies, government bodies, large Australian corporations such as AMP and BHP, and property developers, including Lend Lease (formerly Civil and Civic) and L J Hooker Ltd. Later in the 1960s, it was also driven by private developers such as Grollo and Lustig & Moar (Marsden 2000:46-47).

The construction of large bank buildings was also prolific during the postwar period with the passing of the Banking Act 1947, which led to an increase in the number of bank branches established in Victoria. One of the most significant changes in banking in Australia at this time was the creation of the new Reserve Bank of Australia in 1959, which replaced the central bank known as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (Heritage Alliance 2008:17). Bank buildings constructed in the central city during this period included the State Savings Bank of Victoria at 233-243 Queen Street (1967-68), the Bank of Adelaide Building at 265-269 Collins Street (1959-60) and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Building at 251-257 Collins Street (1971-73).

The period between 1961 and 1963 was one of business recession, while the years between 1967 and 1969 was a time of growth due to two mineral booms. From 1967 to 1971 the construction of new office space in the city centre more than doubled that of the previous five years (City of Melbourne Strategy Plan 1974 in Clinch 2012:66-67). The property boom ended during the economic crash of the early 1970s and the 1974 oil crisis when many British institutions that had founded the commercial property industry left Australia. Government bodies and banks subsequently took over much of the building construction in the city centre (Marsden 2000:48).

SITE HISTORY

The Crown Record Plan notes that the site at which 468-470 Bourke Street is located was owned by Henry Elmes, later purchased by the St Patrick's Society in 1846.

One of Melbourne's first halls, St Patrick's Hall was designed by Samuel Jackson and built on land purchased by the St Patrick's Society in 1846 at 85 (470) Bourke Street West. Dedicated 'to the memory of Ireland', it opened in 1849 for meetings and as a school for Irish children.

Victoria's Legislative Council met there from 13 November 1851 until the construction of the new Parliament House in 1856. For many years a mustering point for the annual St Patrick's Day procession and the Druids' Easter procession, the hall was demolished in 1957. Its original Speaker's chair is now displayed in Queen's Hall (eMelbourne, Andrew May, accessed 20 Jun 2017).

St Patrick's Hall was replaced by the London Assurance Building in mid-1957. Estimated to cost £300,000, the new building was designed by architect Sir Bernard Evans, who employed a highly successful glass curtain wall in its design (Figure 1).

The professional journal *Architecture and Arts* reported on the new building, observing that it was located on the site of St Patrick's Hall where the first Victorian parliament met in 1851: a bronze commemoration plaque was retained on the site. They also noted that the London Assurance company had been operating since it received its Royal Charter from King George I in 1720.

In 1965, the periodical *Building Ideas* published a special edition for the Fourteenth Australian Architectural Convention to display the City's architectural wealth, with tour guides compiled by architect and academic, Neville Quarry, and others. London Assurance House was listed among the showcase of modern and heritage architecture in the guide to Melbourne's best architecture. London Assurance House was constructed during a time of major development in buildings for insurance or assurance in the city centre, which cemented Melbourne's pre-eminent role as a place for financial institutions.



Figure 1. 468-470 Bourke Street in 1959. (Source: Sievers 1959, SLV H2003.100/219 [copyright](#))

Bernard Evans, architect

Bernard Evans (1905-1981) was an architect, builder and civic leader. Born in Manchester, his family emigrated to Australia in 1913 and Bernard worked for his father as a designer and builder. He studied at the Working Man's College (now RMIT University) and established Premier Building Company in 1928. His expansive career spanned a period as Melbourne City Councillor (1949-1973), Lord Mayor (1959, 1960) and work on flats and public housing. His work in the 1950s and 60s was concerned with office buildings and the Emerald Hill Court Estate in South Melbourne. His impressive Ampol House (1958) with the spiral staircase at the corner of Grattan Street and Elizabeth Street was demolished in 2012.

Evans campaigned for the removal of the 132-foot height limit (40 metre) for buildings in the city centre. His architectural firm of Bernard Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking Pty Ltd was disbanded in 1975 following Evans' resignation in 1971. (Goad & Willis eds., 2012: 237-8).

SITE DESCRIPTION

An aluminium and glass curtain wall is set back within the building's façade to create a picture frame effect, bordered by stone facing to the perimeter frame. Slim black-framed hopper-sash windows open from alternate midpoints of the window glazing. By contrast, the curtain's frame is natural aluminium. The much-favoured mushroom colour was applied to the spandrel glass (since modified with panels of a bold vertical contrasting stripe).

Goad notes that

It displays the scale and modulation that enabled such generously glazed buildings to fit comfortably within Melbourne's 19th century structure while being clad in the latest building materials (Goad 1999).

The new building was modern in its design, utilising light-weight building techniques such as open web floor beams protected by vermiculite.

Completing the illusion of total transparency central to modernism, an almost mullion-less glazed entry screen fills the whole gap left by the structure. A miniature replica of the building's structural casing surrounds two pivoted, slimly framed glass doors central to the entrance; completing the symmetry and simplicity of the façade.

One upper level was reserved for car parking accessed from the rear. Modern elevators were installed and despite the hopper sashes on the façade, all floors were airconditioned by a high velocity medium pressure double duct system. The entrance attracted attention with its travertine faced walls, green marble insets, gold ceramic tile panels, and marble stairs and floors. It also had an illuminated ceiling that was then a very new concept, and now removed. The service core ran down the east side of the building.

INTEGRITY

A 1959 photograph of the building shows that there has only minor changes to its existing form, with the removal of the building name from the first level fascia and the added coloured spandrels beneath the windows as the only major differences.

The ground level interior is relatively well preserved and the exterior is generally original. Internal foyer finishes also appear to be early or original, including the white marble stairs and the travertine marble walls.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The former London Assurance House at 468-470 Bourke Street is a fine and representative example of the Post-War Modernist style and clearly demonstrates the typical characteristics of multi-storey commercial buildings designed in the 1950s.

There are a number of buildings in the Hoddle Grid within the City of Melbourne which were designed in the same period and display similar characteristics to the former London Assurance House. These are detailed below.

State-significant places

A comparative example in the City of Melbourne which is located immediately adjacent to the Hoddle Grid is ICI House, 1-4 Nicholson Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon 1958). This place is included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR H0786).

Locally-significant places

Precinct Heritage Overlay

As only a piece-meal evaluation of postwar buildings within the Hoddle Grid in the City of Melbourne has previously occurred, few buildings from the early postwar period are currently included in the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme. Those designed in the 1950s that are included in the Heritage Overlay are currently included as part of Heritage Precincts, but are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places. These places are:



Former Gilbert Court, 100-104 Collins Street (John A La Gerche, 1954-55) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Hosie's Hotel, 1-5 Elizabeth Street & 288-290 Flinders Street (Mussen McKay & Potter, 1954-55), included in HO505 Flinders Gate Precinct as a Significant place.



Coates Building, 18-22 Collins Street (John A La Gerche, 1958-59) included in HO504 Collins East Precinct as a Significant place.



Former Bank of Adelaide Building, 265-269 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton & Lobb, 1959-60) included in HO502 The Block Precinct as a Contributory place.



Former Allans Building, 276-278 Collins Street (Godfrey & Spowers, Hughes, Mewton and Lobb with Charles N Hollinshed, 1956-57) included in HO502 The Block Precinct as a Significant place.

Other Examples

Despite the demolition of many 1950s multi-storey commercial buildings in the City of Melbourne, a number of fine and highly representative examples of this building type that are not currently included in the Heritage Overlay on a permanent basis have been retained with sufficient integrity to demonstrate this class of place. These buildings clearly illustrate the initial period of curtain wall construction in Melbourne and demonstrate similar characteristics to the subject building. The following examples are recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as Individual Heritage Places as part of the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review:



Lauren's House, 414-416 Lonsdale Street (Harold Bloom, 1956) (Interim HO1254).



Former Atlas Assurance Building, 404-406 Collins Street (H Garnet Alsop & Partners, 1958-61) (Interim HO1008).



Former Batman Automatic Telephone Exchange, 376 Flinders Lane (Commonwealth Department of Works, 1957).



Former AMP Building, 402-408 Lonsdale Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1956-59).



Former Ajax House, 103-105 Queen Street (HD Berry, 1956).



HC Sleigh Building, 166-172 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1953-55).



Coles & Garrard Building, 376-378 Bourke Street (Meldrum & Noad, 1957).



Canton Insurance Building, 43-51 Queen Street (Bates Smart & McCutcheon, 1957).

Analysis

The former London Assurance House has maintained a relatively high level of integrity when compared with other examples from this typology. It is highly representative of the period of postwar modern office buildings using curtain wall glazing, and is comparable to other central Melbourne examples such as 376-378 Bourke Street and 276-278 Collins Street (recommended as individually significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review). Whilst not the earliest, it is a fine example and somewhat unusual with the hopper sashes and the streamlined ground floor glazing.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

✓ **CRITERION A**
Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).

CRITERION B
Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).

CRITERION C
Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).

✓ **CRITERION D**
Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).

✓ **CRITERION E**
Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).

CRITERION F
Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)

CRITERION G
Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).

CRITERION H
Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an individual heritage place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-3)	No
TO BE INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

OTHER

N/A

REFERENCES

Contextual History references contained within *City of Melbourne Hoddle Grid Heritage Review: Postwar Thematic Environmental History 1945-1975*

Goad, P 1999, *Melbourne Architecture*.

Goad, P & Willis, J (eds.) 2012, *An Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Cambridge University Press

National Trust Classification Report

Sievers, Wolfgang 1959, '[London Assurance House], Bourke St. South side between Queen & William Streets', State Library of Victoria: Wolfgang Sievers collection, accessed online June 2019.

The following sources and data were used for this assessment (Graeme Butler, 2011). Note that the citation prepared in 2011 did not provide in text referencing.

General sources

Historic Buildings Preservation Council reports on the Melbourne Central Business District from the 1970s;

Melbourne City Council on-line i-Heritage database;

Mahlstedt fire insurance map series held in the State Library of Victoria collection and Melbourne University Archives;

Daily newspaper reports such as 'The Argus';

Australian Architecture Index (AAI), prepared by Professor Miles Lewis and others;

Melbourne City Council building application drawings and files held at Melbourne City Council and the Victorian Public Records Office.

Twentieth Century Architecture Register of Royal Australian Institute of Architects

Graeme Butler, 1982-3, Twentieth Century Architecture Register of Royal Australian Institute of Architects: cites Neville Quarry, 'building ideas' (monthly published by CSR Building Materials Vol. 2, No. 11, March 1965, pp 2-26 March 1965, pp 2-26: Building 100 guide for Architectural Convention; Building Permit Applications 7/8/1957, 31434; 1/6/1959, 33368 (partitions at £1300); 'Architecture and the Arts', (Melbourne periodical) 4/1959: 35

Other sources

Law institute web site 2010

<http://www.liv.asn.au/News-and-Publications/Law-Institute-Journal/Archived-Issues/LIJ-March-2009/LIVCelebrating-150-years> (Law Institute).

Sands & McDougall Melbourne or Victorian Directories

Where required directory extracts were obtained chiefly from Sands & McDougall Melbourne or Victorian Directories dating from the 1850s to 1974.

PREVIOUS STUDIES GRADINGS

**Central Activities District
Conservation Study 1985** B

**Central City Heritage
Study Review 1993** B

**Review of Heritage
overlay listings in the
CBD 2002** B

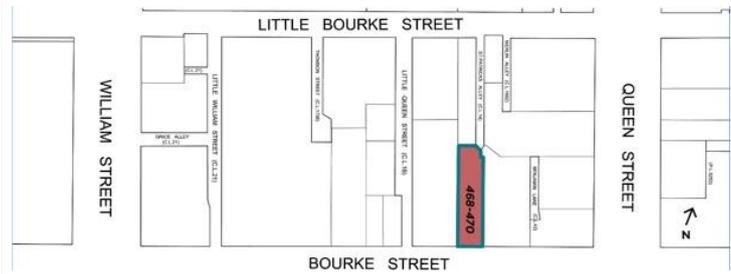
**Central City Heritage
Review 2011** B

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Heritage Place: Former London Assurance House



PS ref no: HOXXXX



What is significant?

The former London Assurance House at 468-470 Bourke Street, Melbourne; now the Law Institute of Victoria, completed in 1960 and designed by architect, developer, former Melbourne City Councillor and Mayor, Bernard Evans.

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

- The building's original external form, materials and detailing
- The building's high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations are not significant.

How it is significant?

The former London Assurance House at 468-470 Bourke Street is of historical, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

468-470 Bourke Street is historically significant as the original location of St Patrick's Hall of 1849, which was built on land purchased by the St Patrick's Society in 1846. In 1851 the hall was the first meeting place of the Victorian Parliament.

The former London Assurance House, now the Law Institute of Victoria, is historically significant for its association with the rapid growth of the insurance and assurance industry in the 1950s-1960s. These companies used new city office buildings as a form of promotion and fund investment, contributing to Melbourne's pre-eminent role as the preferred Australian location for large financial institutions.

The former London Assurance House is historically significant for its association with Bernard Evans; architect, Melbourne City Councillor (1949-73) and former Lord Mayor (1959-60). It is one of many city buildings designed by Evans in his long career as a city developer, architect and principal of the architectural practice Bernard Evans, Murphy, Berg & Hocking Pty Ltd. (Criterion A)

The former London Assurance House is significant as a highly intact, curtain-walled office building from the postwar period demonstrating the style embraced by local architects by the late 1950s. In particular it employs a curtain-wall façade that creates bold contrasts between the clear glazing and solid spandrels. (Criterion D)

The former London Assurance House is aesthetically significant for its ground floor entry glazing designed as a replica of the 'picture frame' in stone facing that surrounds the whole building. The curtain wall is unusual in its design with the horizontal rectangular windows placed across the façade. Whilst some glazing panels have been replaced, the overall pattern of the façade has been retained. It is aesthetically significant for its lightness of structure, elegant transparency and curtain wall glazing of unusual pattern. The building has been identified by at least two key architectural publications including *Architecture and Arts* and in Melbourne's best architecture guide of 1965. (Criterion E)

Primary source

Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)