



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in November 1996 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

The documentation for this place is based on the heritage assessment completed by Jacqui Sherriff, Historian, and Alan Kelsall, Kelsall Binet Architects, in January 2003, with amendments and/or additions by HCWA staff and the Register Committee.

PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 3.19 Marketing and retailing
- 4.1.5 Developing city centres

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 308 Commercial services and industries

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

Wellington Buildings is significant as a good example of a competently designed and built substantial commercial building displaying the aesthetic characteristics of the Federation Free Classical Style. (Criterion 1.1)

Wellington Buildings is of importance for its landmark qualities as a substantial building sited at a conspicuous corner, which serves as one of the main entrances to the city centre. *Wellington Buildings* display a characteristic of Federation streetscapes where the sites at intersections are commonly occupied by the more prominent buildings within the block. (Criterion 1.3)

Wellington Buildings is of importance for the positive contribution it makes to a precinct of mainly Federation/Inter-war period buildings set within streets displaying the characteristics of streetscapes from that period which collectively form a significant townscape. (Criterion 1.4)

* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, Richard; Irving, Robert and Reynolds, Peter, *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

11. 2. HISTORIC VALUE

Wellington Buildings was constructed during the late Gold Boom period and is representative of the reconstruction of the central Perth business district as small shops were demolished and replaced with multi-storey retail and commercial premises accommodating a variety of tenants. (Criteria 2.1 & 2.2)

From its construction in 1910 until 2004, *Wellington Buildings* continued to serve its original purpose as a retail and commercial premises. (Criterion 2.2)

Wellington Buildings was constructed at a time when businessmen and land owners were investing in and constructing retail and commercial premises in the central Perth area, influenced by the proximity of the railway, to take advantage of the gold boom atmosphere of vitality. (Criterion 2.2)

Wellington Buildings was designed for Harry Higham by architects Charles Oldham and Alfred Cox and is a good example of their work. Both Oldham and Cox were attracted to Western Australia from interstate during the Gold Boom in the 1890s and, individually and in partnership, were responsible for a number of commercial, public and residential buildings throughout Western Australia. (Criterion 2.3)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

As a landmark on the corner of William and Wellington streets opposite the Perth Railway Station, *Wellington Buildings* contributes to the community's sense of place. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

With shop units at ground floor level and small office tenancies on the upper floors, *Wellington Buildings* is typical of commercial structures in Western Australia dating from the Federation period through to the immediate Post-War period, and is also representative of the work of architects Oldman and Cox. (Criterion 5.1)

Wellington Buildings combines with other buildings of this type in the vicinity to form a distinctive streetscape characteristic of business districts developed in the 1890s and early 1900s in the Perth metropolitan area and larger rural centres. (Criterion 5.1)

12.3 CONDITION

Wellington Buildings appears to be in a sound to good condition. The paint finish to the street elevations is in poor condition.

12.4 INTEGRITY

Wellington Buildings is of high integrity.

The building continued to serve its original intended purpose to 2004, with shops at ground floor level and small tenancies on the upper level. In 2005, the place is vacant to allow for construction of an underground train station.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

The level of authenticity of *Wellington Buildings* varies throughout the building.

The upper floors of the building are of high authenticity with the fabric of both the interior and exterior of the building remaining largely in its original state.

Prior to the construction of the Perth-Mandurah rail link, the authenticity of the ground floor of *Wellington Buildings* was generally low. The shopfronts appeared to have been altered a number of times in the life of the building, with the interiors of the some shops completely stripped out and replaced. In 2005, all ground floor fit-out has been removed. Original elements such as pressed metal ceilings and timber floors have either been retained in situ or stored for reinstatement. The remaining fabric at ground floor level has moderate integrity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Jacqui Sherriff, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Alan Kelsall, Kelsall Binet Architects and Katrina Chisholm Architect.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Wellington Buildings, a three storey commercial building comprising shops on the ground floor above a basement and offices on the first and second floors, was built in 1910 for Harry Higham. It was designed by the architectural firm of Oldham and Cox and has undergone little change since construction. In 2003, *Wellington Buildings* continued to accommodate retail and commercial tenancies. In 2005, the building is vacant.

On 27 July 1829, not long after the official proclamation of the Swan River Colony, Lieutenant Governor Captain James Stirling posted a government notice that proclaimed 'the new stone will be laid of a New Town, to be called Perth, near to the entrance of the Estuary of the Swan River'.¹ The survey of the new town site began the day after the foundation ceremony on 12 August 1829.² Perth was laid out in a traditional grid pattern with streets surveyed parallel to and at right angles with the main street named St George's Terrace, thereby forming large blocks which were surveyed into smaller allotments.³

Perth was constituted a city in 1856, but its village landscape appearance⁴ remained relatively unchanged up to the 1880s and 1890s. This was despite the erection of a number of landmark public buildings such as the Town Hall (1868-1870) during the Imperial Convict period of the late 1850s to 1870s⁵, and the clearing and construction of Perth roads by convict labour from the 1860s until 1875.⁶

¹ Stannage, C. T., *The People of Perth: A Social History of Western Australia's Capital City, City of Perth*, Perth, p. 30. The name Perth was chosen in honour of the birthplace of then Secretary of State of the Colonies Sir George Murray. (Markey, D. C., 'Pioneer Perth', in Gentilli, J., (ed), *Western Landscapes*, UWA Press, Nedlands, 1979, p. 346.)

² Ibid, pp. 351 – 352.

³ Markey, op. cit., pp. 351 - 352.

⁴ Building regulations drawn up in the 1830s together with the slow progress of the colony resulted in a village landscape of scattered single and two storey brick or stone residences surrounded by gardens mainly to the east of the government domain along Adelaide Terrace, and a slowly developing business area in the vicinity of the government domain to the west of Barrack Street. (Markey, op. cit., pp. 356 – 357; Stannage, op. cit., pp. 193 – 194; Campbell, R., 'Building in Western Australia 1851 – 1880', in Pitt Morison, M. & White, J. (eds.), *Western Towns and Buildings*, UWA Press, Nedlands, 1979, p. 90.)

⁵ Campbell, op. cit., pp. 94 – 104; Battye, J. S. (ed), *The Cyclopaedia of Western Australia*, Vol. 1, 1912, Facsimile Edition, Hesperian Press, 1985, p. 356. Perth was initially administered by a Town Trust after it became a city in 1856. The Town Trust was later replaced by a city council in 1871, subsequent to the proclamation of the Municipal Institutions Act of that year. (Battye, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 536; Georgiou, J., 'The Metropolitan Region', in Pitt Morison & White, op. cit., p. 247; Stannage, op. cit., p. 193.)

⁶ Stannage, op. cit., pp. 157, 164, 170.

The discovery of gold in the Kimberley, Murchison and Kalgoorlie regions in the 1880s and 1890s, and the concurrent granting of Responsible Government to Western Australia in 1890 had a huge impact on the development of Perth.⁷ The physical nature of the city changed dramatically with economic prosperity and the increase of population as a result of gold rush immigration. By the turn of the twentieth century, Perth was totally transformed. Its streets were lined with elaborately styled multi-storey buildings, many of which were the design of a now large architectural profession, and developing suburbs surrounded the city.⁸

With the Central Railway Station to the north of the town site (completed in 1881 and rebuilt in 1894), and the government domain to the south, the area bounded by William and Barracks Streets was consolidated as the commercial and retail centre of the Perth region.⁹ Banks, insurance buildings and professional and commercial offices were constructed along St. George's Terrace, and businesses, shops and warehouses were established in Murray, Hay and Wellington Streets.¹⁰ A number of hotels and theatres were built in this central area and large emporiums such as Foy and Gibson's and Sandover's emerged along the tram route and the shopping strip of Hay Street. Shopping arcades and passage ways were also developed in this period, allowing people to move with ease through the now busy Perth streets and providing spaces for further business outlets within the form of the narrow blocks.¹¹

A number of Perth's prominent businessmen and investors took advantage of the increased prosperity and building boom in the central area of Hay, Murray and Wellington Streets by purchasing property and erecting mixed retail and commercial premises. This investment of central Perth is reflected in the histories of various sites within the area between William and Barrack Streets and St. George's Terrace and Wellington Streets including Sir Charles McNess' *McNess Royal Arcade* (c. 1896), Thomas Molloy's *Theatre Royal and Hotel Metropole (fmr)* (1894; 1897) and *His Majesty's Hotel* (1904), the Congregational Church's *Trinity Buildings* (c. 1906; 1927), and mining magnate Claude De Bernales' *Picadilly Theatre and Arcade* (1938).¹² Probably one of the largest and most significant property investors at the turn of the twentieth century were partners Timothy Quinlan and Daniel Connor who were responsible for the construction of the *Connor Quinlan Building* on the corner of Hay and Barrack Streets in c. 1900 as well as the adjacent *Moana Café and Chambers* (c. 1909) and *Savoy*

⁷ Stannage, op. cit., pp. 193; Seddon, G. & Ravine, D., *A City and its Setting*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 1986, pp. 146 – 147.

⁸ Stannage, op. cit., pp. 193-4; Seddon & Ravine, op. cit., p. 147. Seddon and Ravine state that: 'In 1904, 10 per cent of central Perth was still vacant land, but by 1911, there was no vacant land left.' (Stannage, op. cit., p. 243, cited in Seddon & Ravine, op. cit., p. 152.)

⁹ Hocking, I., 'Growth and Change in Central Perth', in Pitt Morison & White, op. cit. pp. 266 – 267.

¹⁰ Seddon & Ravine, op. cit., p. 156.

¹¹ Hocking, op. cit., pp. 266 – 268.

¹² All information from Kelsall Binet Architects & Bizzaca, K. in association with Sherriff, J., 'City of Perth Central Precinct', draft heritage assessment prepared for HCWA, June 2002.

Hotel (1914).¹³ This type of development took place throughout the central district including properties located in close proximity to entry points into the area such as those along Barrack and William Streets, and across from the railway station in Wellington Street.

Perth Building Allotment 20 Section V (later known as Perth Building Lot V20 and then Perth Town Lot V20) was granted to John Mitchell, a bugler in the '63rd Regiment of Foot, late of Perth in the colony of Western Australia' on 19 May 1837.¹⁴

John Mitchell died in 1868 and left the property to his wife Jane (nee Stanton). Jane bequeathed the property to their son, Joseph Mitchell, on her death in 1878.¹⁵ Joseph sold a portion of Perth Building Lot V20 to Wesley Maley, an auctioneer from Perth, in May 1886.¹⁶ Following Joseph's death the following August, the executors of his will (Joseph Harris, farmer of the Canning, and Carlton Richard Pether, government clerk of Perth) received title to the remainder of Lot V20.¹⁷ Wesley Maley purchased the northernmost section of the Lot (thirty perches on the corner of William and Wellington streets) in 1888.¹⁸

The boundaries of the lot were amended slightly in November 1887.¹⁹

Maley raised a series of mortgages against both portions of the property, suggesting that he was financing building on the site.²⁰ By 1897, shops had been constructed facing both William and Wellington streets.²¹ The 1906 Sewerage Plan shows brick single storey brick shops with a variety of weatherboard and galvanised iron additions to the rear.²²

In 1905, Maley's tenants included a fruiter, a jeweller, a tobacconist and newsagent, and a boot importer in the shops fronting Wellington Street,

¹³ Ibid; Stannage, op. Cit., p. 226.

¹⁴ Town Endowment No. 79, dated 19 May 1837.

¹⁵ Western Australian Biographical Index, Battye Library; Town Grant, 392 & Deed of Memorial Book 6, No. 2819, 9/1/1861, cited by I. Sauman in Hocking Planning and Architecture, 'Perth Urban Rail Development: Proposed Perth Railway Station Platforms 10 & 11 CRAC Alternative 10 – Completion of Heritage Advice February-June 2002', vol. 1, prepared for Jones Coulter Young, September 2002, p. 22. In March 1880, Joseph Mitchell raised a mortgage for the construction of a building on the Lot. This is likely to have been his cottage, as the 1884 City of Perth Rate Book record two cottages with attached shops at the Murray Street end, a house and vacant ground (northern section) occupied by Joseph Mitchell, government clerk, and three cottages in between. (Deed of Memorial, Book 6, No. 2819; Deed of Memorial, Book 8, No. 627, 5 March 1880; City of Perth Rate Book, Central Ward, 1884, SRO as cited in Sauman, op. cit.)

¹⁶ Deed of Memorial Book 9, No. 1228, registered 17 May 1886.

¹⁷ Deed of Memorial Book 6, No. 1388, registered 28 October 1886; Certificate of Title, Volume 20, Folio 169, registered 18 October 1886.

¹⁸ Certificate of Title, Volume 21, Folio 61, registered 31 October 1888; Certificate of Title Volume 24, Folio 231, registered 31 October 1888; Deed of Memorial Book 20, No. 169. The right of carriageway to the south was created at this time.

¹⁹ Town Endowment No. 79.

²⁰ Certificate of Title, Volume 24, Folio 231; Certificate of Title, Volume 66, Folio 156; Certificate of Title 270, Folio 85.

²¹ Metropolitan Sewerage, City of Perth and Suburbs, 1897, PWD 5647, Sheet No. 8, SRO.

²² Metropolitan Sewerage, Perth District, October 1906, PWD 12794, Sheet No. 19 Acc 1647, SRO.

while a grocer, a butcher, an oyster saloon, refreshment rooms, a tobacconist and 'fancy repository' occupied the William Street shops.²³

Maley sold his property to Harry James William Higham, 'gentleman of Claremont' in March 1906.²⁴ According to Dr Battye, Maley made 'a profit of over £40,000 sterling' on the sale.²⁵ Two years later, Higham raised a mortgage with Robert Barr Smith of Adelaide (£10,000 for the southern portion and the same against the northern portion)²⁶, presumably to finance new construction on the site.

Higham had Maley's shops demolished and in their place he had constructed a three storey commercial building with basement, shops on the ground floor and offices in the two floors above. The building was designed by architects Charles Oldham and Alfred Cox, and was built by Simon Bremner Alexander.²⁷ Construction began in 1910, when the work was valued at £13,177.²⁸

Plans for *Wellington Buildings* show four shops and an entrance hall facing William Street. Shops 1 and 1A (150 and 152 William Street) were the largest in the complex, each being 928 square feet. Both had an undercover area (building material unspecified) at the rear. Shops 2 and 3 (154 and 156 William Street) were much smaller, being only 341 square feet. The entrance hall at 158 William Street contained the lift and staircase to the upper two floors. Shop 4 facing the corner of Wellington and William (160-162 William Street) comprised two areas with a total of floor area of 531 square feet. Adjacent on the Wellington Street frontage was Shop 8, with a floor area of 337 square feet. Shops 3, 4 and 8 had rear access to the entrance hall and undercover area behind the building. Shops 7, 6 and 5 along Wellington Street had floor areas of 550, 742 and 776 square feet respectively. There was a large undercover area to the rear of Shop 7, and an external staircase and balcony extending along the rear of shops 5 and 6 for the three levels. There were 15 offices on each of the first and second floors.²⁹

The first tenants of shops fronting Wellington Street were Grundy & Co, outfitters, Martha Shannon, ladies underclothing and Watson's Supply Stores (from No. 509 to 513 respectively). The William Street shops accommodated a branch of Washington & Co, tobacconists, the Alexandra Tea Rooms and Dan Casey, a stationer. The Universal Shoe Shores

²³ *Wise's Post Office Directory*, 1905, pp. 323-24.

²⁴ Certificate of Title, Volume 66, Folio 156, registered 17 March 1906; Certificate of Title, Volume 270, Folio 85, registered 17 March 1906.

²⁵ Battye, J. S., *Cyclopedia of Western Australia*, vol 2, Hussey & Gillingham, Adelaide, 1913, pp. 764-65.

²⁶ Certificate of Title, Volume 24, Folio 231, registered 10 April 1908; Certificate of Title, Volume 66, Folio 156, registered 10 April 1908. The land was surveyed and designated Lot 123 in 1909. See DOLA, Survey Diagram 3034, approved 22 November 1909.

²⁷ City of Perth, Record of Building Licences, No. 661, 30 October 1909, as cited by Sauman, op. cit., p. 30.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

²⁹ Oldham & Boas Architects, 'Wellington Buildings Ground Floor Plan', February 1924, in City of Perth Building Files.

occupied the corner shops at 515 Wellington Street and 160 William Street.³⁰ A billiard saloon operated by Thompson and James occupied the basement (street address 160 William Street), while a variety of tenants occupied the first and second floor offices. These included financiers, solicitors, stock and land agents, and the Royal Health Institute operated by Miss Carey White. Robert Bastow was the first caretaker.³¹

By 1912, a number of tenancies in the offices had changed. Due to the proximity of Perth Railway Station across Wellington Street, the offices attracted a number of railway related activities. These included the Railway Officer Assistant of Western Australia (second floor, Office 11 and 21 on first floor), the Western Australian Locomotive Drivers Union (first floor, Office 23) and the Western Australian Society of Railway Employees (second floor, Office 24).³²

Although the building is recorded as 'Wellington buildings' in the 1911 *Wise's Post Office Directory*³³, the first time the building is recorded as having a name in the City of Perth Rate Book is in 1915 when it is listed as 'Higham Buildings'. It is recorded as *Wellington Buildings* for the first time in 1918.³⁴

Harry Higham died in 1917 and probate of his will passed to his sons, Harry and William, both farming at Barramining in the Williams district.³⁵ The two portions of the lot were consolidated into a single title in 1926. At the same time, the owners were granted permission to use a portion of Town Lot V19 fronting Wellington Street³⁶, presumably to obtain rear access to *Wellington Buildings* and their adjacent commercial building at 509 (also known as 507) Wellington Street.³⁷ The Highams also retained a right of carriageway to the south of the Lot.

By 1924, there was a mezzanine in the rear section of the shop at 509 Wellington Street.³⁸

Although the tenants in the various shops and offices changed over the years, *Wellington Buildings* retained its retail character in the ground level shops, while commercial businesses occupied the basement and upper floor offices overall. For example, in 1945 two restaurants and two clothing stores occupied the shops facing Wellington Street. A hairdresser and

³⁰ *Wise's Post Office Directory*, 1911, pp.361, 363; 1910, pp. 344-45. Some of these businesses had previously been tenants in Wesley Maley's shops.

³¹ *Wise's Post Office Directory*, 1911, p. 363.

³² City of Perth Rate Book, Central Ward, 1912, Sheet 730, Folios 139-40, SRO.

³³ *Wise's Post Office Directory*, 1911, p. 363.

³⁴ City of Perth Rate Book, Central Ward, 1915, Sheet 966, Folio 108, Entry 1929; 1918, Sheet 1089, Folio 118, Entry 1888, SRO.

³⁵ Certificate of Title, Volume 24, Folio 231, registered 28 July 1917; Certificate of Title, Volume 66, Folio 156, registered 28 July 1917.

³⁶ Certificate of Title, Volume 925, Folio 100, registered 25 May 1926.

³⁷ The right of access is clearly shown on Fire and Accident Underwriters Association, 'Perth and Fremantle Plans', Sands and McDougall Ltd, Perth, 1924-35, Perth Block B, Batty Library 36/6/1-33.

³⁸ City of Perth Detail Fire Survey', compiled by Mahlstedt's, 1942 (last revised c. 1972), Sheet 2, Batty Library WKRM 3/11/1.

tobacconist, optician and bookstore occupied the William Street shops and the Central Shoe and Boot Specialists occupied the corner shop. By this time, the basement area had been partitioned to accommodate three manufacturers' agents. Tenants in the upper offices included wholesalers, financiers, and estate agents, an accountant and insurance agent, a ticket writer, Lincoln Knitting Mills and a tailor.³⁹ One of the longest tenants was the Perth Health Institute, operated by Mrs R McIlwraith (who also operated the Ladies College of Health from *Wellington Buildings* in 1914). The Perth Health Institute later became the Health Culture Institute and then the McIlwraith Health Institute, operated by W Neil McIlwraith. In its various forms, the Health Institute occupied several offices on the first floor of *Wellington Buildings* from 1914 until c. 1942. Another long-term tenant was the Universal Shoe Stores in the corner shop facing the intersection of William and Wellington Streets (1910 to c. 1945).⁴⁰

The building continued to accommodate various unions and associations over the years. These included the Shop Assistants and Warehouse Employees Industrial Union (c. 1915-c. 1945), the Laundry Employees Union and the Cleaners and Caretakers Union of Workers (c. 1930), the WA Clothing Union (c. 1920-c. 1930), Australian Legion Ex-Service Men and Women (Inc) Association (c. 1945) and the Boilermakers' Society of Australia (c. 1945).

Available documentary evidence shows that there has been very little alteration to the place. A comparison of the 1924 plans and later sewerage and fire survey plans shows that some of the ground floor shops have undergone internal rearrangement (removal or reinstatement of dividing walls between tenancies and installation of partitions).⁴¹

Mary and Arnold Raine, of the Wentworth Hotel on the opposite side of William Street, purchased the property in 1953. Following Arnold's death in 1958, one half undivided share in the property (southern portion) was given to the University of Western Australia.⁴² The University was bequeathed the other share following Mary Raine's death in 1961⁴³, and was issued with a new title to Lot 123 (portion of Perth Town Lot V20).⁴⁴ The University also acquired all properties bounded by Wellington, Murray, Queen and William streets at this time. The properties made up the endowment of the University's Raine Medical Research Foundation, with the income generated from the properties going towards medical research.⁴⁵

³⁹ *Wise's Post Office Directory*, 1945, pp. 93, 95.

⁴⁰ *Wise's Post Office Directories*, 1910 to 1949, entries for *Wellington Buildings*.

⁴¹ Oldham & Boas Architects, 'Wellington Buildings Ground Floor Plan', February 1924, in City of Perth Building Files; City of Perth Detail Fire Survey', compiled by Mahlstedt's, 1942 (last revised c. 1972), Sheet 2, Battye Library WKRM 3/11/1;

⁴² Certificate of Title, Volume 925, Folio 100, registered 3 September 1953; 20 May 1958. A separate Certificate of Title was issued to the University (Volume 1213, Folio 989, registered 20 May 1958).

⁴³ Certificate of Title, Folio 925, Volume 100, registered 15 June 1961. Stanley Lewis Prescott, Vice Chancellor, and Sir Alexander James Reid were named as executors of the will.

⁴⁴ Certificate of Title, Volume 1250, Folio 567, registered 31 July 1961.

⁴⁵ Helen Burgess and Alice Steedman, 'Royal Hotel heritage assessment', prepared for HCWA, August 2000.

In the post-World War II period, retail and commercial tenancies in areas such as William and Wellington streets went into decline. This was primarily the result of the decentralisation of Perth, which saw the relocation of industries such as retail and wholesale to new suburban areas, the pedestrianisation of Murray and Hay streets and Forrest Chase to draw customers into this tighter retail centre, and the redevelopment of the cityscape to form large office blocks, thus encouraging the use of larger, modern spaces.⁴⁶ The development of Forrest Place, closed to vehicular traffic in 1978/79 and transformed into a mall in the mid-1980s⁴⁷, and Raine Square by the University of Western Australia in 1984-86⁴⁸ also impacted on tenancies in streets such as William and Barrack and subsequently areas in Wellington and Murray streets, as these new developments acted as a focal point for pedestrian access/flow to the central malls. In her history of this precinct, Sauman argues that it was the 1995 opening of the Globe Hotel as backpacker accommodation that allowed retail premises in this vicinity to develop linked commercial activities, such as internet lounges, souvenir shops, laundromat and camera shop.⁴⁹

The University of Western Australia sold Lot 123 to Alberni Pty Ltd in May 1989.⁵⁰ Alberni Pty Ltd was also registered as the owner of *Mitchell's Buildings* and *Maclaren's Chambers*, both in William Street, on 18 May 1987.⁵¹

Since the 1950s, Perth's public transport system has been heavily focused on providing a bus network. This followed the construction of the Narrows Bridge in 1959 and the subsequent staged opening of the Kwinana and Mitchell freeways, which in the Perth area culminated in the completion of the Narrows Interchange in 1973. Perth's limited commuter railway system has followed the routes set by Mitchell Freeway to the north, while buses have also followed in the path of freeways and highways, reaching out to developing suburbs.⁵² In June 2002, long held plans for a rail link south of Perth to Mandurah were finalised, with the route to follow the path of the Kwinana Freeway. With regard to the city section of the route, the State Government decided on an option that involves the building of a railway tunnel underneath William Street, linking to an underground station at the Esplanade and continuing to meet with the existing Northern Line along the

⁴⁶ Seddon & Ravine, *op. cit.*, pp. 180-190; Hocking, *op. cit.*, pp. 280-286; Alexander, I., 'The Central Area', in Gentilli, *op. cit.*, pp. 410-420.

⁴⁷ Seddon & Ravine, *op. cit.*, p. 189; Hocking, *op. cit.*, p. 284. Forrest Place was created as a street in 1924. See 'Commonwealth Bank, Perth', Heritage Assessment prepared for HCWA, 1994, p. 4.

⁴⁸ Palassis Architects, 'William, Murray, Queen and Wellington Streets Streetblock (including Raine Square) Heritage Assessment', prepared for Spowers Architect on behalf of City and Suburban Group Pty Ltd, March 2001, pp. 18-19.

⁴⁹ Sauman, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁵⁰ Certificate of Title, Volume 1250, Folio 567, registered 29 May 1989.

⁵¹ Certificate of Title, Volume 1294, Folio 192, registered 18 May 1987; Certificate of Title, Volume 1768, Folio 330, registered 18 May 1987. Maurice Alter of Toorak, Victoria, and Peter D Grant of North Essendon, Victoria, own Alberni Pty Ltd.

⁵² Edmonds, L., *The Vital Link: A History of Main Roads Western Australia 1926-1996*, UWA Press, Nedlands, pp. 136-143, 213-29.

Kwinana Freeway. Two options for the construction of the tunnel were proposed. The first would mean as little as possible above ground disturbance and subsequent commercial development of the resumed land; and, the second proposes the demolition of the buildings in the area to allow excavation of the tunnel. *Wellington Buildings* would be affected by either proposal.

Wellington Buildings has been entered in the City's Town Planning Scheme with Level 2 protection, meaning that it is considered to be of considerable significance and that conservation of the place contributes to the conservation of the heritage of the City.⁵³ In January 2003, *Wellington Buildings* was occupied by a number of tenancies on all levels. The street level shops include an internet lounge, a bookshop, a laundromat, a photographic shop, a student travel agency, a men's hairstylist and a tackle shop.

As part of the planning processes for this railway development, heritage assessments of the buildings located on the western portion of the block bounded by Wellington and Murray Streets and William Street were commissioned. It was agreed that while the majority of buildings on the site of the new rail development would be demolished, four places identified as having cultural heritage significance on William and Wellington Streets, including *Wellington Buildings*, would be retained within the redevelopment.

In 2004, ownership transferred to the Western Australian Planning Commission and the place was vacated. In 2004, ground floor shops were stripped and suspended canopies removed. Original fabric, including pressed metal ceilings, was retained. Timber floors were removed and stored for later reinstatement. The building was pinned to support the structure during the construction of an underground train station beneath and behind the building.

In 2005, the place is vacant and construction of the rail infrastructure continues.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Wellington Buildings is a three-storey masonry construction building at the south-east corner of Wellington and William streets within the City of Perth. This intersection at the base of the *Horseshoe Bridge* is one of the main gateways to the city centre with *Wellington Buildings* and *Royal Hotel*, which stands directly opposite on the south-west corner of the intersection, forming complementary entry statements. To the north across Wellington Street is the *Perth Railway Station Precinct*. Prior to construction of the Perth-Mandurah rail link, neighbouring buildings were of a similar scale but featured a range of detailing, broadly classical in style which form a streetscape of strong visual interest. Adjacent buildings to on both William and Wellington Streets have since been demolished.

⁵³ 'Perth Central Area Heritage Survey: Wellington Buildings 150-160 Wellington Street', prepared by Heritage and Conservation Professionals for the City of Perth, 1999.

Wellington Buildings displays characteristics of the Federation Free Classical style which was prevalent in Western Australia around the turn of the twentieth century and common in commercial structures.⁵⁴ It is a restrained version of the style, without exuberant finishes. The place accommodates eight individual shopfront tenancies at street level with office spaces in the floors above.

The building has a truncated corner at the street intersection and extends across the full length of the Wellington Street frontage. Prior to 2004, it abutted a neighbouring two storey building to the east. A single width vehicle laneway separated the west elevation from MacLaren's Chambers [demolished 2004] to the south along William Street and lead to a bitumenised service area in the rear south-east corner of the site [since removed]. A central rectangular lightwell rising vertically through the full height of the building is uncovered at roof level allowing light to penetrate the internal spaces and the basement which extends under the western portion of the building and is accessed from the southernmost tenancy along William Street.⁵⁵

Constructed with masonry walls which have been rendered and later painted across the principal street elevations, the less prominent rear elevations reveal red brickwork laid in English Garden wall bond.

Prior to redevelopment of the site associated with the Perth-Manduarh rail link, the ground floor was described as follows: A canopy suspended above street level has a boarded timber soffit and runs around the street facades with signwritten advertising for the individual street level tenancies displayed within the fascia. The canopy is stepped along William Street following the gentle fall of the site towards Wellington Street. There is little consistency in the fitouts of the street level tenancies and much of the original fabric has been replaced or concealed. Above the canopy, the building is highly representative of the original expression and therefore almost completely intact. The ground floor tenancies are not consistent and are stylistically characteristic of retail fit-outs of the last decades of the twentieth century featuring large expanses of aluminium framed glazing and vibrant advertising. While the facades have been almost completely replaced, some tenancies feature pressed metal ceilings which may be indicative of authentic fabric. Without more intrusive investigation it is difficult to determine whether further early fabric exists beneath the current surface finishes. The basement level is a largely open space with a concrete floor and painted brickwork walls. The supporting structure for the building and floor above is exposed revealing deep, studded steel girders and timber herringbone strutting.

⁵⁴ Apperly, Richard; Irving, Robert and Reynolds, Peter *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989, pp.104-107.

⁵⁵ Early drawings produced by Oldham Boas in 1924 show the basement level extended beneath the entire footprint of the building but further rooms were not accessible or evident at the time of inspection.

In 2004, ground floor shops were stripped and suspended canopies removed. Original fabric, including pressed metal ceilings, was retained. Timber floors were removed and stored for later reinstatement. The building was pinned to support the structure during the construction of an underground train station beneath and behind the building. The ground floor now comprises the original structure, with all fit-out gutted.

The elevations, which are similar but not identical due to the longer William Street frontage, are divided into bays of varying widths by pilasters of Corinthian order that rise through the first and second floor levels to support the entablature and are embellished with classically influenced mouldings. At roof level, a triangular pediment is located symmetrically about the truncated corner within the partially balustraded parapets of the two street elevations. The parapets conceal the roof form and material which is likely to be of low-pitched, corrugated sheet metal but is not apparent from the immediate vicinity. Each pediment features some ornamental moulding and on both elevations, the words 'Wellington' and 'Buildings' appear in bas relief lettering on either side of the pediment, within the frieze below. The bays defined by the pediments stand proud of the main building line. The pilasters are paired at the truncated corner with Ionic capitals supporting the entablature. The base of the pilasters is located above the canopy and the portion of the shaft above first floor level is fluted. This classical detailing together with a rectangular recess which has been incorporated into the panel beneath the second floor windows differentiate the elevations of the upper floor levels which are otherwise identical, having matching fenestration. The timber frame sash windows have horizontal heads but where the brickwork is unrendered on the rear elevations, three course soldier lintels are apparent.

The upper floors of the building are accessed from William Street through double swing aluminium doors leading to an entrance lobby with lift and stairwell. The balustrade of the quarter-turn stair features turned joinery and stained glass windows, backlit from the central lightwell, have been included at the half landings. Each floor comprises an L-shaped central corridor with the offices either side having an outlook to the street or the lightwell. The southern end of the corridor opens onto a timber floored balcony with a wire mesh balustrade enclosing the lightwell and providing access to the communal sanitary facilities located at the south-east corner of the upper floors, and escape access to the ground level via external timber framed stairs.

The upper floors display similar interior surface finishes and detailing much of which is consistent with the original period of construction. This consists of carpeted timber floors; moulded timber skirtings and architraves; timber panelled doors with glazed fanlights; plastered walls; moulded cornices and decorative wall vents. Pressed metal ceilings displaying various designs are in evidence and selected tenancies feature timber fireplace surrounds. Although the fireplaces are no longer operable with panelling across the openings, at least one brick chimney with rendered mouldings is extant. A further interesting feature is the hoist mounted beneath the roof level at the eastern end of the second floor balcony. Although this does not

appear to be original, a steel beam projecting from the wall above external door openings in the south-east corner of the building provides evidence of more traditional methods of hoisting large and heavy items to the upper floors from the service yard. The upper door opening has a wide timber threshold projection tied back to the wall with metal chain.

With the exception of the fit-out and subsequent gutting of the ground floor tenancies, documentary evidence shows there has been little change to the place. A photograph from the 1940s shows a slightly different configuration for the canopy which is supported on columns along the edge of the footpath and appears to have a curved corrugated iron roof.⁵⁶ There was also highlighting immediately above the canopy which is no longer apparent. At some stage a lift has been installed within the building requiring the construction of a brick motor room above roof level, which is accessed by a narrow steel stair on the western side of the lightwell. The external stretcher bond brickwork of the sanitary facilities contrasts with the earlier bond, but it has not been determined exactly when these alterations took place.

The place is mostly in good condition and many of the tenancies at each of the levels were actively occupied at the time of inspection in 2003. In 2005, the place is vacant and construction of the rail infrastructure continues.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

Charles Oldham and Alfred Cox designed a number of commercial buildings in Perth while in partnership between 1905 and 1912. These included an office block in St George's Terrace (1907), two office blocks in Howard Street (1910; 1911) and additions to Perth's Esplanade Hotel (1910). They also designed a number of residences in the West Perth/Mount Lawley area, as well as country hotels and public buildings. Both Cox and Oldham were attracted to Western Australia during the Gold Boom of the 1890s (Cox from South Australia in 1893 and Oldham from Victoria in 1896). Cox initially practiced in Cue and was responsible for many public and private buildings in the Murchison and Geraldton, before moving to practice with Oldham in Perth. Oldham initially practiced with H J Eales; Fremantle Markets is one of their more notable works.⁵⁷

Similar precincts of commercial buildings remain along William Street in Northbridge, between Newcastle Street and Row Street, and in Fremantle at the west end of High Street and along Market. Street.

Much of the development in Hay and Murray streets west of William Street, as far as Milligan Street has a similar scale to *Mitchell Buildings*, with premises developed for wholesale and retail purposes, and upper floors designed as an extension of the functions of the ground floor, or as suites of offices.

⁵⁶ Seddon, George and Ravine, David *A City and Its Setting, Images of Perth Western Australia*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 1986, p.31.

⁵⁷ Kelly, I P, 'Architectural Biography, 1890-1915: A brief biographical list of architects who practiced in Western Australia in the years 1890 to 1915', prepared as part of Master of Architecture, UWA, 1991.

Despite incremental changes and infill of the buildings along William and Wellington Streets in the 1970s and 1980s, including the former Myers building on the east side of the street and the infill development associated with Raines Square on the west side of the street, the structures as they stood in 2003 were a substantially intact Federation-period commercial precinct unparalleled within Perth City. Due to subsequent demolition of sections of the precinct relating to construction of the Perth-Mandurah rail link, the precinct in 2005 is now moderately intact.

13. 4 KEY REFERENCES

No key references.

13. 5 FURTHER RESEARCH
