



**HERITAGE  
COUNCIL**  
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

## **REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES**

### **Assessment Documentation**

#### **11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE**

Cultural heritage significance means aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for individuals or groups within Western Australia.

In determining cultural heritage significance, the Heritage Council has had regard to the factors in the *Heritage Act 2018* and the indicators adopted on 14 June 2019.

##### **PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)**

- 3.19 Marketing and retailing
- 3.2 Constructing capital city economies
- 4.1 Planning urban settlements
- 4.6 Remembering significant phases in the development of settlements, towns and cities
- 8.13 Living in cities and suburbs

##### **HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)**

- 104 Land allocation and subdivision
- 107 Settlements
- 208 Newspapers
- 308 Commercial services and industries

#### **11(a) Importance in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of Western Australia's history**

Each of the buildings in *St Georges Terrace Commercial Group* demonstrate the economic priorities of Perth's commercial centre in the inter war period. Much of these priorities can be ascribed to the consequences of an expanding population with rising wealth following the gold boom.

*St Georges Terrace Commercial Group* reflects the importance of St George's Terrace which, since the start of colonisation, has been the central business street of Perth and thus Western Australia.

*Newspaper House* is associated with the *West Australian* and when constructed was claimed to be part of the centenary of that newspaper. Newspapers have been a critical part of forming a colony and a democracy in Western Australia, and the *West Australian* is the longest-running title in this State.

**11(b) Importance in demonstrating rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of Western Australia's heritage**

*St Georges Terrace Commercial Group* is unique in Western Australia as a surviving group of multi-storey commercial buildings from the interwar period. No other group of this period is extant on St Georges Terrace to demonstrate fine examples of the contemporary commercial architecture.

**11(c) Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Western Australia's history;**

*St Georges Terrace Commercial Group* comprises buildings which demonstrate fine examples of building design theories and construction technologies of the interwar era and have potential to yield information on the history of architecture in this period.

**11(d) Its importance in demonstrating the characteristics of a broader class of places;**

Each building in *St Georges Terrace Commercial Group* is a fine example of its architectural style. The places function as a distinctive and recognisable group that has cohesive character within its diversity.

*St Georges Terrace Commercial Group* is the last and most imposing element of the commercial streetscape in central Perth based on patterns originating during the gold boom.

Each of the buildings in *St Georges Terrace Commercial Group* clearly demonstrates the contemporary design principles relevant for their function and status as commercial architecture in the early 20th century.

**11(e) Any strong or special meaning it may have for any group or community because of social, cultural or spiritual associations;**

*St Georges Terrace Commercial Group* has social value as the only remaining precinct representing the historic commercial streetscape of St George's Terrace.

**11(f)<sup>1</sup> Its importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by any group or community;**

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<sup>1</sup> For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture. Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus and Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

*St Georges Terrace Commercial Group*, with its classically restrained composition, high quality materials palette, and high standard of traditional craftsmanship demonstrated in the building facades, is significant for its substantial aesthetic contribution to the St Georges Terrace streetscape, which is otherwise characterised by contemporary high rise commercial development dating from the mid-20th to early 21st centuries. The similarity of form, scale, and materials between *Newspaper House*, *Royal Insurance Co Building* and *WA Trustee Building*, gives rise to a high degree of collective aesthetic street appeal that is greatly valued by the community.

The elaborately decorated copper tenancy frontages of *Royal Insurance Co Building*, along with the handsomely detailed wrought iron fronted balconies, are particularly well-executed examples of bespoke design and give this building a distinctive character that nonetheless remains compatible with its adjoining neighbours.

The group demonstrates an awareness of international design trends and adaptations of the same. It also demonstrates an understanding of the use of diversity within a coherent grouping.

**11(g) Any special association it may have with the life or work of a person, group or organisation of importance in Western Australia's history;**

*St Georges Terrace Commercial Group* is associated with architects Hobbs, Smith, and Forbes, and in particular Lieutenant General Sir Joseph John Talbot Hobbs who was, almost certainly, responsible for the majority of the design work for *WA Trustee Building*, *Royal Insurance Co Building* and *Newspaper House*.

*Newspaper House* is associated with significant Western Australian businessmen who owned the *West Australian* newspaper, including George Shenton, J. Winthrop Hackett and Charles Harper.

**11(h) Its importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement;**

*St Georges Terrace Commercial Group* demonstrates the latest methods and materials available at the time, including steel framed construction with concrete, allowing for different façades than had previously been available. *Newspaper House's* use of an arcade as a street-level entrance was innovative.

**12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

**12.1 CONDITION**

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For consistency, all references to garden and landscape types and styles are taken from Ramsay, J. *Parks, Gardens and Special Trees: A Classification and Assessment Method for the Register of the National Estate*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.

Having undergone comprehensive conservation works between 2011 and 2012 as part of the Brookfield Place redevelopment, and being subject to a regular cleaning and maintenance programme under the current facility management arrangement, *St Georges Terrace Commercial Group* is in very good condition. Some interior spaces are beginning to show minor signs of wear and tear, focussed mainly around public circulation areas, such as within stairwells and lift lobbies. Some of the original interior stone and terrazzo linings have minor cracking and staining, and some stair treads show signs of historic wear that contributes to the overall patina of the place. Within the original stairwell of *WA Trustee Building* there is evidence of water damage and failing paint finishes to the ceilings and walls at Level 4, which appears to be associated with mechanical services concealed within a bulkhead over the stair landing. Remedial works are required in this area to address staining and peeling paint finishes.

## 12. 4 INTEGRITY

This section explains the extent to which the fabric is in its original state.

*St Georges Terrace Commercial Group* is of moderate to high integrity overall. None of the original machinery or equipment that formed part of the print hall operations of *Newspaper Hall* remains on site. Much of the rear portions of *WA Trustee Building*, *Royal Insurance Co Building* and other major and minor structures that formed part of the original *Newspaper House* complex are no longer extant, having been demolished either recently as part of the Brookfield Place redevelopment, or many years ago as part of previous failed redevelopment attempts. The south ends of *Newspaper House*, *Royal Insurance Co Building* and *WA Trustee Building* are largely constructed of new fabric. The original exterior walls of *Newspaper Hall*, which had been compromised by previous redevelopment initiatives, have been completely re-clad in contemporary materials.

The *St Georges Terrace* building facades are mostly intact. The intrusive 1950s attic addition, removed from *Royal Insurance Co Building* as part of the recent refurbishment, has enabled the former stone parapet and metal parapet railing to be reconstructed to original detail, although the original wrought iron has been substituted for contemporary aluminium. Flagpoles have also been reconstructed on the rooftops of *Newspaper House*, *Royal Insurance Co Building*, again using contemporary powder coated aluminium. Each building also features a new rooftop plant enclosure of contemporary design. The infilling of the former stair lightwells between *Royal Insurance Co Building* and *WA Trustee Building*, and on the north side of *Newspaper House* are unfortunate, and not easily reversible. Most other recent interventions are generally readily identifiable as new fabric, and potentially reversible.

The building interiors are largely intact, with original elements and decorative finishes, such as staircases, wall linings, ceilings, plasterwork, lift casings, joinery skirtings, and cornices generally retained and conserved, or reconstructed to original detail. Interior fitouts, and other modifications carried out to cater for the new uses, such as the subdivision of internal spaces, installation of new services, or compliance upgrades, have generally been undertaken so as to be largely reversible and recognisable as new work.

## 12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

This section explains the extent to which the original intention is evident, and the compatibility of current use.

Overall, *St Georges Terrace Commercial Group* is of moderate authenticity, with most current commercial uses largely compatible with the original design intent. On the whole, new interior layouts respect the overall form and volume of key spaces. The original print hall function of *Newspaper Hall* and the former direct functional relationship between it and *Newspaper House* is no longer readily apparent, with the two buildings now presenting as commercially separate entities. The original retail arcade use at ground floor level within *Newspaper House* has been reinstated, whilst *WA Trustee Building* and *Royal Insurance Co Building* retain commercial office uses on their upper levels, consistent with their original intent.

### 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentation for this place is based on the physical evidence completed by Palassis Architects, and the documentary evidence completed by consultant historian Eddie Marcus (History Now), in June 2016, with amendments and/or additions by the Heritage Council and the Department.

#### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

The group, located on St George's Terrace, Perth, comprises the following individual places:

- P2113 *WA Trustee Co & Royal Insurance Co Building* (1924, 1928): which will be dealt with as separate places
- P2111 *Newspaper House* (1932), including *Newspaper Hall* (1932): which will be dealt with as separate places.

#### St George's Terrace

In the earliest plans drawn up for the Swan River Colony, St George's Terrace was already assigned the role of the colony's main street. Although initially unnamed, it was usually called Front Street or Main Street and, later, the Terrace. The Governor's domain, military establishment, Anglican Church, and government gardens were all established on St George's Terrace. Towards the east, the Terrace became Adelaide Terrace, and here many of the wealthier settlers established a home.<sup>2</sup>

Building regulations introduced in August 1829, required land on the Terraces to have a house worth at least £200 within two years. In other streets, this value was only £100. Labourers with allotments in St George's or Adelaide Terrace could rarely meet the requirement, so their land was resumed and sold to a more affluent resident. Consequently, land in this area of town soon concentrated in the hands of the wealthy.<sup>3</sup>

Extant non-residential buildings erected along the Terraces during the colonial era include P2117 *Old Perth Boys School* (RHP) (1853), P2119 *The Cloisters* (RHP) (1858), P2105 *Trinity Uniting Church Group* (RHP) (i.e. the original Trinity Church, 1865), P2100 *The Deanery* (RHP) (1859), P2120 *Barracks Arch* (RHP) (1863), P2102 *St George's Cathedral* (RHP) (1879), and P2095 *Government House and Grounds* (RHP) (1863).<sup>4</sup>

Other colonial buildings on St George's Terrace included the Lombard Chambers, a single-storey structure later replaced by Perth's first 'skyscraper', the nine-storey Colonial Mutual Life Building (1936, demolished 1980). Where P1998 *London Court* (RHP) (1937) now stands was once a squat building in which Charlie Somers MLC conducted a lucrative real estate business. P2101 *Burt Memorial Hall* (RHP) (1918) replaced a long single-storey verandahed building which was the headquarters of the Commissioner of Police.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Pitt Morrison, M., 'The Shaping of Early Perth', *Western Geographer* 6.1 (January 1982): 45-67

<sup>3</sup> Pitt Morrison, M., 'The Shaping of Early Perth'

<sup>4</sup> For details, see the relevant State Heritage Office assessments.

<sup>5</sup> 'Perth's Changed Face,' *Western Mail*, 6 November 1947: 4

From the 1890s, as a consequence of the gold boom, much of the city centre was rebuilt, sometimes over and over again. Both West Australian Newspapers, and WA Trustee Co. had new buildings constructed in the 1890s. Another early sign of transformation of St George's Terrace was the four-storey Prince's Buildings erected on the corner of William Street in 1897, and the erection of P2116 Perth Technical College, which reflected the tendency toward Gothic influences in school buildings common during this time.<sup>6</sup>

During World War I, construction slowed, although it resumed on a large scale in the 1920s, reaching a peak shortly before the Depression. During the Interwar era, commercial buildings were usually constructed on classical lines, with structural elements covered with decorative finishes which could be more or less ornate.<sup>7</sup> The *WA Trustee Building* (1924) and *Royal Insurance Co Building* (1928) are fine examples of commercial 1920s architecture. The construction of *Newspaper House* (1932) during the Depression requires some explanation, and this is given below.

By World War II, the streetscape of St George's Terrace westward from William Street was unrecognisable when compared to the start of the century. In addition to *Newspaper House*, the award-winning design of its year, there was also the Adelphi Hotel, Winterbottom's, Shell House, a modernised Karrakatta Club (P2118), and several up-to-date buildings housing professional suites.<sup>8</sup>

### **WA Trustee Building (1924), part of P2113 WA Trustee Co & Royal Insurance Co Building**

Perth Town Lot L14 was originally assigned to Henry Trigg, a builder who was appointed Superintendent of Public Works,<sup>9</sup> as Enrolment 104. This grant was cancelled, probably because Trigg failed to improve the property. However, he later reacquired the same land and erected a residence there.<sup>10</sup> After Trigg died in 1882, he left the land to his daughters Eliza and Amelia. By the mid-1890s, the Lot passed into ownership outside the family.<sup>11</sup>

Prior to the establishment of the WA Trustee Company, people would appoint local businessmen as trustees and executors. However, these estates were often 'very indifferently administered'.<sup>12</sup> The WA Trustee Company commenced in October 1892, and the first board of directors included some of the leading names in Western Australia, such as George Shenton, James Lee Steere, Charles Harper, William Loton, George Randell, and George Leake. The first estate for administration came into the company's hands in October 1893, that of Henry

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- 6 City of Perth Rate Books, 1898; *Wise's Post Office Directory*, 1898; for a detailed analysis of the history of educational architecture see: Centre for WA History (Gregory, J. & Smith, L.), 'A Thematic History of Public Education in Western Australia', prepared for the Building Management Authority (1995)
  - 7 Pitt Morison, M., & J. White (eds), *Western Towns and Buildings* (UWA Press, Perth, 1988): 115-26
  - 8 'Perth's Changed Face,' *Western Mail*, 6 November 1947: 4
  - 9 Stannage, C. T., *The People of Perth* (Perth, 1979): 34, 39, 149; Pitt Morison & White, *Western Towns*: 105
  - 10 Deeds of Memorial, Book 3 Memorial No. 324, 8 October 1844; Book 4 Memorial No. 152, 5 January 1848
  - 11 Deeds of Memorial, Book 8, Memorial No. 1480
  - 12 Barker, Edmund S., 'Reminiscences of the Early Days of the West Australian Trustee Executor and Agency Company Limited' (September 1930)

Munday, of York.<sup>13</sup> The company grew rapidly; starting with only £6,000 capital, however by 1924 the estates under its management exceeded £3,600,000.<sup>14</sup>

In 1895 the company purchased a freehold property in Barrack Street, followed by the erection of a four-storey building on the site in 1899. However, continued growth made it necessary for the company to secure even larger premises. In June 1920, it purchased Town Lot L14 facing St George's Terrace, next to the P2116 Perth Technical College. On this site the four-storey *WA Trustee Building* was erected in 1924. The architects for what was described as "perhaps the most modern in design in the city" were Hobbs, Smith, and Forbes, while the contractors were A. T. Brine & Sons.<sup>15</sup>

The building occupied the full frontage of 52 feet (16m) and rose to a height of 70 feet (21m). The façade was described as being "of the Renaissance period", a phrase almost certainly supplied by the architects. The lower portion was built of Mahogany Creek granite, with the rest of the façade dressed in Donnybrook stone. With the exception of the façade, the whole building, including floors and stairs, was constructed of reinforced concrete.<sup>16</sup>

The WA Trustee Company itself occupied the ground and first floor, while the rest of the building was let to tenants as offices. The company's office was described as "elaborate" yet possessing a "quiet dignity". Floors were of inlaid parquet jarrah and many of the walls lined with red and blue marble. Particular attention had been paid to light, with large windows for daylight, using Venetian blinds to keep out the glare and heat. Due to the nature of the company, one of the central features was the 'probate vault' where documents of value were stored. This took the keys of three individual officers to open.<sup>17</sup>

One technological introduction was the dictograph. As a consequence, "instead of calling the typist in for dictation, this can now be delivered from the manager's chair to the typist's desk on the floor beneath". For recreation, there was a roof garden so large there were briefly plans for the installation of a tennis court.<sup>18</sup>

An additional storey was added to the building in 1954 under the supervision of architects Forbes and Fitzharding. This addition was designed sympathetically and was consistent with the character of the original building.<sup>19</sup>

During the 2010–2012 City Square development, the rear third of *WA Trustee Building* was demolished, along with the removal of the rear section of the 1954 addition, and the creation of a new metal framed rear extension and a fourth floor balcony.<sup>20</sup>

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13 Barker, 'Reminiscences'

14 'Modern Office Building', *Daily News*, 20 November 1924: 7

15 'Modern Office Building', *Daily News*, 20 November 1924: 7

16 'Modern Office Building', *Daily News*, 20 November 1924: 7

17 'Modern Office Building', *Daily News*, 20 November 1924: 7

18 'Modern Office Building', *Daily News*, 20 November 1924: 7

19 Noel Bell Ridley Smith & Partners, 'Newspaper House Group: Conservation Plan', Vol 1 (January 2002): 37

20 Palassis Architects, 'Conservation Policy Update': 7-8



## **Royal Insurance Co Building (1928), part of P2113 WA Trustee Co & Royal Insurance Co Building**

*Royal Insurance Co Building* is situated on the northeast corner of Lot L14 (see *WA Trustee Building* above for brief history of the site). It was the second of the 20th century buildings to be erected on the site under study.

The Royal Insurance Company was established in Liverpool, England, in 1845. In 1849 a branch was established in Melbourne, quickly followed by Port Phillip, and the business rapidly expanded in Australia.<sup>21</sup> They established their first office in Western Australia in Fremantle in 1885.<sup>22</sup>

In 1928 a new *Royal Insurance Co Building* was designed, as the *WA Trustee Building* had been, by Hobbs, Smith and Forbes and constructed by A. T. Brine & Sons. A building licence was issued in September 1928,<sup>23</sup> although it was not officially opened until March 1930.<sup>24</sup>

*Royal Insurance Co Building*, which replaced a small brick building, rose 80 feet (24m) above the pavement, with a frontage of 47 feet (14m). It was constructed on fireproof lines with a steel frame, bricks and cement, except the front which was granite to the first floor level. The remainder was in Donnybrook stone. The front elevation was described as being of “classical design” which would “compare well with the other big buildings in the neighbourhood”.<sup>25</sup>

As was common in this period, it was announced that most of the material in the building would be West Australian. However, the steel was imported from the United Kingdom. All the floors were of reinforced concrete, the majority covered with jarrah blocks, although the vestibule floor was laid with marble. On the flat roof was proposed to be the caretaker’s quarters and a luncheon room.<sup>26</sup>

The Royal Insurance Company itself only occupied about one third of the ground floor, with the rest will be available for tenants. Provision was made for subdividing the floors, although they were designed to be replanned to suit the convenience of tenants.<sup>27</sup>

The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) opened their ‘Street Architecture’ award to non-British architects in 1929, and three years later the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA) decided to give the first medal in Western Australia to Rodney Alsop and Conrad Sayce for their work on the Hackett Memorial building at the University of Western Australia. Second and third prize went to Goldsbrough House and *Royal Insurance Co Building*, both on St George’s Terrace, and both designed by Hobbs, Forbes and Partners. Goldsbrough House was a similar building to that of the Royal Insurance Company.<sup>28</sup> This was the only year buildings other than the winner of the award were recognised.<sup>29</sup>

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21 ‘Royal Insurance Company,’ *Morning Bulletin*, 5 August 1899: 5

22 ‘News and Notes,’ *West Australian*, 26 November 1885: 3

23 Noel Bell Ridley Smith & Partners, ‘Newspaper House Group’: 33

24 ‘New Insurance Building,’ *West Australian*, 18 March 1930: 12

25 ‘New City Building,’ *West Australian*, 30 June 1928: 4

26 ‘New City Building,’ *West Australian*, 30 June 1928: 4

27 ‘New City Building,’ *West Australian*, 30 June 1928: 4

28 ‘Well-Designed Perth Buildings,’ *West Australian*, 18 October 1932: 12

29 *The Architect*, March 1982: 6

A fourth floor extension, designed by Hawkins and Sands, was added to *Royal Insurance Co Building* in 1957.<sup>30</sup> During the most recent development works, the rear third of the building was demolished, and the 1957 floor removed.<sup>31</sup>

### **P2111 Newspaper House (1932)**

Perth Town Lot L13, on which *Newspaper House* now stands, was first alienated by the Crown on 23 June 1840. The block was assigned to Perth resident Charles Browne (or Brown) in return for the performance of the usual location duties, which included erecting a property on the land.<sup>32</sup>

Browne was probably a speculator, since a week after he received the grant, on 1 July 1840, he sold the lower portion of the block, a small section facing Bazaar Terrace (now Mounts Bay Road), for £600 to George Williams, gentleman, of Perth. On 2 November 1842, this portion passed to Charles Ridley Hands of Northam, who sold it nearly four years later to George Shenton for £300. The fall in the value of this land by one-half during a period of six years is an instance of the fluctuation of land values which caused discontent and disorganisation in the early days of the Colony.<sup>33</sup>

Browne sold the St George's Terrace part of the block on 5 December 1841 for £600 to William Young Shenton, horticulturist, of Perth. Land prices continued to fall, and in December 1850 William Shenton transferred his interest in Lot L13 for £200 to George Shenton, who then became the owner of the whole block. On the death of George Shenton, the land was vested in trustees, who sold it to the West Australian Newspaper Company on 6 January 1905.<sup>34</sup>

Leading up to the Depression of 1929, advertising revenue at *The West Australian* continued to climb. Between 1926 and 1929 columns of advertising rose from 16,000 to more than 20,000. This increased the size of the newspaper and the number of staff employed, and there was little space left for expansion in P2109 West Australian Chambers, where the paper was then produced. Consequently, Hobbs, Smith and Forbes, architects were engaged to design a new building for the company, which was completed in 1932.<sup>35</sup>

The St George's Terrace front of *Newspaper House* was a four-storey building designed on "modern classic lines", utilising "simple detail combined with efficient grouping". The dominating feature of the façade was a central projecting bay with a terracotta surround to the main entrance archway of the ground floor, surrounded by Ionic columns rising through the first and second storeys. The remainder of the front with its simple treatment lent emphasis to the main approach through this central archway, leading as it did to the newspaper offices located in the rear building, *Newspaper Hall*. Over the centre of the front parapet was *The West Australian's* coat of arms cast in pressed cement. An electric clock, the only clock

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30 Noel Bell Ridley Smith & Partners, 'Newspaper House Group': 35

31 Palassis Architects, 'Conservation Policy Update': 7

32 Crown Grant Enrolment No. 256, signed by John Hutt, then Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Swan River Colony.

33 'Newspaper House: Story of a Building Scheme,' *West Australian*, 5 January 1933: 7-8

34 'Newspaper House,' *West Australian*, 5 January 1933: 7-8

35 'Newspaper House,' *West Australian*, 5 January 1933: 7-8. It is interesting to speculate what would have happened if preliminary planning for the building had been delayed by a few months and the effects of the Depression (which would have severely reduced advertising revenue) had begun to be felt.

on the Terrace, was suspended from a cantilever beam placed centrally between the columns of the first floor.<sup>36</sup>

The ground floor of *Newspaper House* consisted of shops and the remaining floors of office, professional and club accommodation. *Newspaper House* was designed to carry an additional storey at a later period if required.<sup>37</sup>

Dominating the ground floor was the barrel-vaulted approach, lined with shops, which ran from St George's Terrace to the advertising and general offices of the newspaper company, thus connecting the front and rear sections of the complex. The entire first floor was occupied by the Swan Brewery, while the second floor was subdivided into offices and a dental suite. Most of the top floor was occupied by the Naval and Military Club, and was laid out in accordance with the club's requirements: hall, lounge, billiard room, bar, card room, office and large dining room. At the back of the top floor was a large lecture room and a balcony with views to Applecross.<sup>38</sup> It was also noted that the top of the building had a roof garden overlooking the Swan River, but it is currently unclear if this was different to the balcony mentioned above.<sup>39</sup> There was also a basement, which appears to have been largely used as storage for newspaper activities (e.g. large rolls of paper),<sup>40</sup> and which had its entrance at the rear. Outside this entrance was a covered yard with a granolithic paving for use by shop tenants unloading trucks.<sup>41</sup>

The architect of the building, Lt-Gen Sir Talbot Hobbs, stated he had visited London and the Eastern States to inspect relevant buildings there before commencing the design process. Hobbs also noted, perhaps predictably, "In accordance with the desires of the directors of the West Australian Newspapers Ltd. used, wherever possible, nothing but West Australian materials in the composition of the building."<sup>42</sup>

In November 1935, the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) approved the decision of the Royal Institute of the Architects of Western Australia (RIAWA) to award the RIBA medal for street architecture to Hobbs, Forbes & Partners for their design of the *Newspaper House* façade. After the award had been opened up to non-British architects in 1929, the first medal in Western Australia had been given to Rodney Alsop and Conrad Sayce for their work on the P3519 *Hackett Memorial Buildings (University of Western Australia)* (RHP). A RIBA-designed plaque was affixed to the wall of *Newspaper House*, while medals and diplomas were presented to the successful firm of architects.<sup>43</sup>

### **Newspaper Hall (1932)**

The new home of *The West Australian*, which was approached from St. Georges Terrace by an arcade through Newspaper House, covered about two acres of ground, and extended from the rear of Newspaper House to The Esplanade (then

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36 'Newspaper House,' *West Australian*, 5 January 1933: 7-8

37 'Newspaper House,' *West Australian*, 5 January 1933: 7-8

38 'Newspaper House,' *West Australian*, 5 January 1933: 7-8

39 'Newspaper House Officially Opened,' *Western Mail*, 12 January 1933: 42

40 'The Origin of Paper,' *Western Mail*, 1 December 1938: 76

41 'Newspaper House,' *West Australian*, 5 January 1933: 7

42 'Newspaper House. Opening Ceremony,' *Western Mail*, 12 January 1933: 4

43 'RIBA Medal for Street Architecture', *Building and Construction*, 8 November 1935; *The Architect*, March 1982: 9; 'Street Architecture', *Western Mail*, 14 November 1935: 10

Bazaar Terrace). The building was designed to meet the requirements of a modern newspaper business, which could employ up to 330 staff. It included an emergency power and lighting plant, together with engineers' and carpenters' workshops, so machinery breakdowns could be repaired in-house. The architects were Hobbs, Forbes and Partners, and the contractor was C. W. Arnott.<sup>44</sup>

It comprised four storeys, with a flat roof and roof garden overlooking the Swan River. The main façade facing the river is designed in what the architects called a "modern classic style", carried out in Donnybrook freestone, with a granite base. Two projecting flanks were pierced by windows which rose the full height of the building, ending at the roof garden level in two pavilions. Since light was essential, *Newspaper Hall* was constructed as an 'island' so natural lighting was available in all departments, with windows, where necessary, extended along the entire length of the walls, along with roof lights.<sup>45</sup>

To give added strength to the base, granite architraves were erected around five square openings, which provided access to the basement, used to store paper which was fed to the presses above through apertures in the Machine Room (now known as Print Hall) floor. The central and upper portion of the façade was designed in the 'Ionic style', with three-quarter columns rising through two floors supporting a frieze and a bold projecting cornice. Above the cornice at the roof garden level was a colonnade which tied together the two flanking pavilions, and was surmounted by a tympanum bearing the name of the newspaper and the company's coat-of-arms.<sup>46</sup>

Passing from St Georges Terrace through the arcade, the visitor would have found themselves in the general office, where most of the business with the public was transacted. The office was 63 ft by 83 ft (10m x 25m) and designed in a "restrained modern style, without any unnecessary embellishments". Eight columns supported a mezzanine gallery around three walls. Prominent on the north wall were two large marble tablets, an Honour Roll and a brief history of *The West Australian*.<sup>47</sup>

Various specialist offices came off the general office, including accounts, advertising manager and the advertising sales people. A strong room for the preserving of ledgers and business documents was also situated here. Opening from the mezzanine gallery were rooms for the administrative officers, including the boardroom, chairman of directors, the managing editor, the business manager, and the secretary. The boardroom was treated in the "modern style of interior decoration" and opened onto the flat roof. The chairman's room was panelled in jarrah, as was those of the managing editor and business manager.<sup>48</sup>

The Machine Room was situated below the composing room at the southern end of the building. Here were the large six-unit high-speed press and folders, with an hourly output of 75,000 copies of *The West Australian*, and two octuple presses for printing *The Western Mail*. The presses were raised to floor level on 3m steel under-structures set in beds of reinforced concrete. The effects of vibration were eliminated by keeping these foundations separate from those of the surrounding

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44 'A Modern Newspaper Home,' *West Australian*, 5 January 1933: 9

45 'A Modern Newspaper Home,' *West Australian*, 5 January 1933: 9

46 'A Modern Newspaper Home,' *West Australian*, 5 January 1933: 9

47 'A Modern Newspaper Home,' *West Australian*, 5 January 1933: 9

48 'A Modern Newspaper Home,' *West Australian*, 5 January 1933: 9

building. Surrounding the Machine Room was a mezzanine gallery for visitors to view the presses at work.<sup>49</sup>

During the most recent campaign, the rear third of *Newspaper House* was demolished, including the covered way between *Newspaper House* and *Newspaper Hall*. A new commercial lobby was introduced, and the façade was modified to accommodate contemporary shopfronts. *Newspaper Hall* saw the demolition of an intrusive reinforced concrete northern addition, and the creation of a number of new openings. Additions included a café, kitchen, and associated amenities, as well as balconies on the podium level and first floor. A new service core was introduced, and the rooftop modified to form a new roof terrace. Machine Hall was renamed Print Hall and functioned as an upmarket multi-level bar and restaurant from 2012.<sup>50</sup> In March 2016, Print Hall Dining Room restaurant for renovation, scheduled to reopen in the spring of 2016.<sup>51</sup> Other venues within the complex continue to operate.

### 13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

*St Georges Terrace Commercial Group* comprises *WA Trustee Building* (1924), a five-storey plus raised basement concrete-encased steel frame and masonry commercial building, constructed in the Inter-War Beaux Arts style; *Royal Insurance Co Building* (1929), a five storey plus raised basement steel framed masonry and iron commercial building, constructed in the Inter-War Commercial Palazzo style; *Newspaper Hall* (1932), a two storey plus basement commercial building, constructed in a utilitarian Inter-War style; and *Newspaper House* (1932), a four-storey plus basement concrete-encased steel frame, rendered masonry and iron commercial building, constructed in the Inter-War Stripped Classical style, with Art Deco influenced façade motifs.

The group forms an integral part of a larger commercial precinct known as Brookfield Place, which was redeveloped between 2008 and 2012. The twelve-hectare site also contains a 46-level premium grade high-rise office tower (Tower 1), a 16-level office tower (Tower 2) and associated public spaces, alfresco dining areas, walkways and connecting elements. The towers, along with much of the public spaces, fall outside of the registered curtilage of *St Georges Terrace Commercial Group* and do not form part of this assessment.

#### Siting

Brookfield Place is located at 125 St George's Terrace, in the heart of the Perth central business district, within the city block bound by St George's Terrace to the north, William Street to the east, Mounts Bay Road to the south and Mill Street to the west. The development occupies a single lot on the south side of St George's Terrace, with *St Georges Terrace Commercial Group* positioned along the north and part of the east edge of the lot. Development in the immediate vicinity is generally corporate in character, dominated by contemporary high-rise commercial office developments, dating from the mid-twentieth to early twenty-first century.

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<sup>49</sup> 'A Modern Newspaper Home,' *West Australian*, 5 January 1933: 9

<sup>50</sup> Colonial Leisure Group Pty Ltd, 2016, *Print Hall* Source: <http://www.printhall.com.au/>, Accessed 22 July 2016; Palassis Architects, 'Conservation Policy Update': 6-7

<sup>51</sup> Colonial Leisure Group Pty Ltd, 2016, *Print Hall* Source: <http://www.printhall.com.au/>, Accessed 22 July 2016.

When viewed from St George's Terrace, the street front buildings are, from east to west: *Newspaper House*; *Royal Insurance Co Building*; and *WA Trustee Building*. Newspaper Hall is located further within Brookfield Place, approximately 75 metres to the south of *Newspaper House*, with no direct street frontage. Formerly directly connected to *Newspaper House* via a two-storey bridge link structure, Newspaper Hall now presents as a standalone building of separate commercial identity within Brookfield Place.

Not included in this assessment, but located adjacent to the west, is *Old Perth Boys School and Perth Technical College* (P2117). This group includes the Old Perth Boys School, a single storey, stone and iron, Gothic Revival style building, dating from 1853. This building has been recently adapted for commercial use and is currently operating as a student outreach centre. Also part of this group is the *Perth Technical College*, a two-storey plus raised basement masonry and tile former institutional building, constructed in the Federation-Gothic style, with decorative influences from the Arts and Crafts, Tudor and Art Nouveau styles. This building is owned and managed by Brookfield as a commercial premises developed to be an adaptive re-use of a heritage building.

The front facades of *Newspaper House*, *Royal Insurance Co Building* and *WA Trustee Building* abut each other and approximately align to the front (St George's Terrace) boundary of the site. Within the front setback, a split-level concrete, steel and glass deck, incorporating a universal access platform lift, two sets of steps, and an alfresco dining area, has been constructed. A second at-grade alfresco dining area, defined by removable canvas umbrellas and low height concrete planter boxes is situated in front of *Royal Insurance Co Building*.

The space between *WA Trustee Building* and *Old Perth Boys School and Perth Technical College* now forms one of three principal pedestrian walkways into Brookfield Place, the others being located to the east of *Newspaper House* and to the west of *Old Perth Boys School and Perth Technical College*. The central walkway has a steel and glass canopy which projects northwards out over the footpath, and under which is suspended a tenancy box sign of recent construction. The wider, east walkway, replaces an earlier right-of-way formerly servicing the *Newspaper House* complex, which was relinquished as part of the redevelopment. It incorporates a canopy of similar contemporary design, which is stood off from the east façade of *Newspaper House*. The west walkway, which is the widest of the three, constitutes the main pedestrian access into the site. Walkways are paved in granite and cobble sets.

Brookfield Place itself is oriented around a series of pedestrian plazas and at-grade and elevated pedestrian walkways, which run perpendicular and parallel to St George's Terrace, affording the site and its buildings a high degree of permeability. The natural fall in level across the lot from north to south is accommodated for in a split-level plaza arrangement, with the main podium plaza level stepped back generously from the rear of the St George's Terrace heritage buildings, to form a void which overlooks a lower ground level plaza. The lower ground level plaza generally corresponds to the original basement levels of the heritage buildings. Vertical connections between the two main plaza levels are provided for by a number of generously proportioned open stairways, ramps and an outdoor lift, all of recent construction.

The south part of the site has undergone the greatest degree of change in terms of original building form and fabric. The relationship between *Newspaper House* and *Newspaper Hall*, which were previously directly connected above ground level by a two storey bridge link and other sundry structures, has changed following the demolition of these structures. The south end of *Newspaper House* has subsequently been re-built in a contemporary architectural style and materials. *Newspaper Hall* has been completely re-clad in contemporary materials and is no longer readily identifiable externally as a heritage building. The rear third of *WA Trustee Building* and *Royal Insurance Co Building* have been demolished, and new contemporary south facades constructed to an increased setback, to now approximately align with the south façade of P2117 Perth Technical College. A similar colour and materials palette has been used across each of these new facades, with aluminium composite panels the predominant cladding material.

The south end basement levels of the St George's Terrace heritage buildings, and the basement level of *Newspaper Hall* at its north and east end, interface directly with the lower ground level plaza via a series of at-grade alfresco dining areas. Bridging over the south void at ground floor level are several elevated pedestrian walkway links, which connect the raised south entrances of the St George's Terrace heritage buildings with the main plaza level. The result is a highly activated south edge that is contemporary in its architectural language and palette.

All recently introduced elements, include walkways, bridge links, canopies, and decks, which are typically stood off from the building façades, and are generally recognisable by their contemporary construction in materials of concrete, steel and glass.

### **WA Trustee Building (1924, refurbished 2012), part of P2113 WA Trustee Co & Royal Insurance Co Building**

#### External form, style & details

*WA Trustee Building* is a five-storey plus raised basement concrete-encased steel frame and masonry commercial building, constructed in the Inter-War Beaux Arts style. The building accommodates a substantial roof-top plant area, that is set well back from the front façade so as not to be visually intrusive, and a low pitched contemporary metal deck roof, hipped at the rear.

The principal St George's Terrace (north) elevation is symmetrically composed and features a finely resolved Donnybrook sandstone faced façade, which is raised over a dark grey, coursed, rough face trachyte plinth. The façade has a complex division of vertical and horizontal components and a high degree of architectural enrichment to openings and cornices.

Horizontally, the façade is divided into a base section, comprising basement and ground floor; a middle section, comprising the second, third and fourth storeys; and a top section, comprising the upper storey attic level, part of a sympathetically designed later addition, dating from 1954. The overall vertical rhythm is of five roughly equal bays, which are defined with different emphasis in each of the horizontal sections of the façade.

Commencing at first floor level and extending upwards to attic roof level, the façade is vertically divided into a large, slightly recessed central bay and two smaller flanking end bays. The central bay is of smooth sandstone appearance and features restrained Classical-style embellishments, carved in bas-relief. The

flanking bays are of plain rusticated appearance. A similar plain rustication is used in the base section of the façade across its entire width to define the first storey, which is raised over the aforementioned plinth.

The base section is topped with a moulded sandstone string course, beneath which the letters 'THE WEST AUSTRALIAN TRUSTEE EXECUTOR & AGENCY COMPANY LIMITED' are carved in bas-relief. This section contains the centrally located main entrance, on either side of which are two windows, of unequal width. Each window incorporates a toplight above a timber transom and aligns to a basement windows below of similar width but different design. Basement windows are low and wide and incorporate protective wrought iron external grilles, whilst ground floor windows are more vertically proportioned.

The main entrance, which is raised over the basement and deeply recessed, comprises a central pair of unpainted timber panel doors, over which projects a stone canopy, with dentil soffit. The doors have a toplight window over of unusual geometric design, which is repeated in the toplights of the raised ground floor windows. The slightly projecting stone lintel has the inscription 'ESTABLISHED 1892'.

Within the recessed bay of the central section, symmetrical tripartite divisions are defined by bas-relief pilasters of restrained classical design. The pilasters, which have dentil capitals and other subtle surface articulation, span two storeys to support an entablature, with thrusting cornice, positioned at the bottom of the fourth storey level. Within the entablature frieze, the letters 'W.A TRUSTEE BUILDINGS' are carved in bas-relief. More simplified pilasters, of squat appearance, are used to mark the bay divisions within the fourth storey section.

Spanning the entire width of the façade, to define the horizontal transition between the central and attic sections, is a deeply projecting stone cornice. The soffit features dentils of similar design to the aforementioned entrance canopy.

In the top (attic) section, the recessed central bay is of plain sandstone appearance, with no façade divisions or embellishment beyond that of the window surrounds. The parapet steps up in the central portion and is topped by a simple moulded cornice on each rusticated flanking bay.

Fenestration is highly ordered, both vertically and horizontally. Window openings within the central and attic sections generally feature rusticated carved sandstone surrounds, plain or stepped keystones, and projecting moulded stone sills. Five openings through the central section are set off Classical segmental pediments, with the pediments to the two third-storey windows in the flanking bays broken through their horizontal geisa. Contrasting this are the two second storey windows in the flanking bays, each with a flat stone pediment over. Basement windows are at ground level and have small, timber fixed lights with original black painted wrought iron crossbar grilles fitted externally. Ground floor windows have tall, narrow timber fixed lights incorporating a timber transom and geometric toplight, as previously mentioned. Other windows have multi-paned timber sliding sash windows, of decreasing verticality moving up the façade. All original windows are painted a distinctive 'red lead' colour.

The south façade, which is of entirely recent construction and no longer on its original alignment, is clad in aluminium composite panels, and incorporates large regularly positioned, commercial-grade aluminium fixed windows. What remains



visible on the west and east façades is mostly original fabric of relatively unremarkable appearance. Original walls are cement rendered with a paint finish. Original window openings are clustered around the stairwell and amenities area on the west side of the building, where they are generally set into plain reveals with splayed rendered masonry sills finishing flush with the face of the wall. Around the rear offices, they are larger and more regularly ordered, with projecting flat pediments, classically styled. Original openings around the amenities area generally retain modest traditional timber sliding sash windows, whilst stairwell windows contain distinctive Art Nouveau style leadlights with pattern glazing. Around the office areas, openings are much larger and contain traditional multi-pane sliding sash timber windows, most with a timber transom and toplight. As with the front façade, original windows are painted in a 'red lead' colour. By contrast, contemporary windows introduced during the refurbishment works, such as the large fixed light on the west elevation servicing the ground floor northwest tenancy, are of pre-finished black aluminium.

#### Internal layout and details

*WA Trustee Building* has been adapted for boutique retail, food and beverage uses at basement and ground floor level, and for commercial offices on the other levels.

At ground floor level, internal planning is organised around the centrally located St George's Terrace raised entry lobby, which leads directly into the original lift and stair lobby. The original stairwell is located immediately to the west of the lift and stair lobby, whilst a double doorway at the south end denotes the original public entrance into the former banking chamber, currently an upmarket bar and bistro. A separate retail tenancy, accessed via a doorway from the west side of the entry lobby, occupies the small north-west corner room.

Access into the entry lobby from the street is via a short flight of external trachyte steps, followed by a second set of internal steps which, along with the threshold landing, are clad in white marble. A non-original frameless glass entry assembly separates the entry lobby from the lift and stair lobby. The entry lobby features original two-tone marble dado cladding, gold lettered marble signboards, hardwood parquet floors, timber joinery, plastered walls, and plastered ceilings decorated with simple Beaux Arts-style motifs. The unpainted volute timber handrail to the marble steps is original, whilst the metal handrail to the external stair is not. A fire indicator panel has been installed near the entry doors at the northeast corner of the threshold landing.

Entry into the north-west corner tenancy is via a pair of unpainted glazed timber doors set into a carved black marble decorative surround. The floor is finished in herringbone patterned hardwood timber parquet. Walls, which have been recently wall-papered to just above door head height, are otherwise plastered and have an unpainted timber picture rail. The fitout, including light fittings, is of recent origin.

Moving through into the lift and stair lobby, a coved decorative plaster ceiling, set off tall, classically styled wall pilasters, lends a voluminous effect to the space. A key feature is the large, carved timber doorway of the former banking chamber entry to the south, which retains its original geometric leadlight toplight windows, but not its original sidelights or doors, which have been replaced with frameless glass assemblies of recent origin. The single passenger lift, which is located in the southwest corner of the lobby, has an unpainted timber architrave and doors of contemporary stainless steel appearance.

Off to the west, the original stairwell has a painted reinforced concrete stair, with a painted wrought iron and moulded timber handrail. The stair features box-shaped newel posts that have an unusual studded appearance. A contemporary metal handrail has been fitted into the top of the original timber handrail, which is unpainted. Between ground and first floor levels the stairwell walls are embellished with similar marble dado cladding as the entry lobby, whilst at the other levels unpainted vertically planked timber dados are used. Some of the main landings incorporate hardwood timber parquetry flooring. Art Nouveau style leadlight sash windows are a feature of the stairwell.

Within the former banking chamber, which wraps around the lift, stair and entry lobby to the east, the form and detail of the original structural grid, with its decorative plaster column capitals and beam coffers, and the original dentil cornices, high ceilings and timber parquetry floors, remain exposed to view through much of the bistro dining area, although a number of recently introduced discrete bulkheads and plenums conceal ceiling mounted services in several locations. A new bar with timber countertop and a large glazed display cabinet have been installed near the bistro entry.

On each of the upper levels, planning is organised around the lift and original stairwell, with a new amenities insertion, located on the south side of the stairwell. At each level, the stair and lift open onto a small lobby, formed from a contemporary frameless glass airlock, beyond which open plan office areas occupy the balance of the building floor plate. The amenities insertions, which are of drywall construction, penetrate into this office space to the south and each contain male, female and universal access toilets, a store room and services riser. Finishes include full height white wall tiles, tiled floors and skirting, suspended plasterboard ceilings and contemporary plumbing fixtures.

Although each office area retains similar base build finishes, the level of enrichment used within the ground floor public spaces does not extend to the upper levels. Walls are generally painted plain hard-set plaster, with simply moulded timber dado rails and picture rails. Original hard-set plaster ceilings are coffered about the structural grid but have no cornices or decorative plasterwork. Timber joinery is generally unpainted and most windows retain timber sills internally. Most office areas have recently carpeted floors and new services are generally reticulated overhead in suspended galvanised trays, or otherwise exposed. Suspended plasterboard ceilings have been installed in some locations however for the most part the original ceilings remain exposed to view. Tenancy fitouts vary across each level and are of recent origin.

The basement level currently accommodates the bistro bar, a commercial kitchen and patrons' amenities, the interiors of which are all dominated by recent fitouts.

**Royal Insurance Co Building (1929, refurbished 2012), part of P2113 WA Trustee Co & Royal Insurance Co Building**

External form, style & details

*Royal Insurance Co Building* is a five storey plus raised semi-basement steel framed masonry and iron commercial building constructed in the Inter-War Commercial Palazzo style. Positioned between *Newspaper House* and *WA Trustee Building*, it features a classically influenced Donnybrook sandstone façade. An intrusive addition, dating from the 1950s, which was extant during the 1998

assessment of the place, has since been demolished, and the rooftop remodelled to accommodate a new rooftop plant enclosure and rear roof terrace. The plant enclosure is set back from the front façade so as not to be highly visible from the street, which has enabled a new stone façade parapet, incorporating bespoke metal balustrade railing, to be reconstructed to original detail. The white powder coated aluminium flagpole, which is located immediately behind the railing on the building midline, is also a reconstruction of the original flagpole in this location.

The principal (north) façade is highly symmetrical, featuring a rusticated trachyte base up to first floor level, on which is raised the sandstone façade. The base is composed of three arches of approximately equal span and rise, set over a recessed basement and ground floor tenancy frontage, which is notable for its elaborately detailed copper cladding. Three finely detailed cantilevered balconies, which project out over the arch keystones at first floor level, are another distinguishing feature of the façade. Balconies retain their original decorative wrought iron balustrades, painted black, with gold coloured company monogram, and original steel framed French doors. Doors are multi-paned with matching sidelights and toplights, painted traditional dark green.

The sandstone portion of the façade features a projecting dentil cornice at roof level, under which there is a plain sandstone frieze embossed with a raised metal letter sign 'ROYAL INSURANCE CO BUILDINGS'.

The façade is vertically divided into three approximately equal bays, collectively sandwiched between two flanking piers. These piers are of rusticated appearance and carry a decorative corbel through the depth of the entablature, under which is positioned a cartouche embellishment. Two plain sandstone pilasters, which extend from the top of the trachyte base section through to the underside of the entablature architrave, separate the bays, lending a vertical emphasis to the façade.

Window openings are highly ordered, both vertically and horizontally. Within each bay they are collectively grouped across each level through a full height moulded sandstone architrave. Horizontally they are separated by simple sandstone spandrels. Openings have slightly projecting stone sills. Windows are steel framed with small glazing bar divisions, similar to the French doors, and are painted traditional dark green.

On the east and west elevations, little of the original building fabric remains exposed to view. On the west elevation, the former stair lightwell, located between *Royal Insurance Co Building* and *WA Trustee Building*, has been infilled between first and fifth floor level, to form a new services and amenities area. The insertion, which projects out over a secondary at-grade accessway leading from the main precinct plaza, and conceals most of the west exterior wall in this location, is clad in maroon coloured aluminium composite panels. It has small vertical windows and horizontal grilles built into the central section of the south elevation. Beyond this to the south, a full structural bay of the original building remains exposed, recognisable by its light rendered masonry appearance, splayed rendered sills and original steel framed multi panel windows, which are set to an ordered pattern between within each structural bay.

On the east elevation, the majority of the exposed façade is of contemporary construction, consisting of full height glazing, metal clad spandrel panels and horizontal metal louvres.

The south wall is a contemporary façade clad in aluminium composite panels. The façade is symmetrically divided vertically into two main bays, which are articulated by slightly projecting ribs that extend full height between first floor and roof level. Glazing is full width between the ribs, and separated by metal-clad ribbon spandrels between floor levels. At basement level, bi-fold doors open up directly onto the lower ground level plaza, providing a high degree of connectivity with this outdoor space.

At roof level, the south roof terrace is accessed from the upper level lift lobby and consists of a small steel framed semi-enclosed outdoor food preparation area, which extends southwards into a larger open terrace. The food preparation area has a tiled floor, metal louvred roof, and stainless steel benches built in on the west and north sides. The terrace has a composite timber decking, laid in a basket weave pattern, and steel framed glass balustrades along its west, south and east edges. The lift motor room, visible beyond the food preparation area to the north, has a painted rendered appearance with a pre-finished metal deck roof. The south end of the rooftop plant enclosure, visible from the roof terrace, is of similar painted rendered appearance and partially roofed using metal louvres.

#### Internal layout and details

*Royal Insurance Co Building* has been adapted for food and beverage uses at basement and ground floor level and retains commercial office uses on its upper levels. The ground floor entry area is particularly notable for its quality design and workmanship and use of high quality materials, including intricately designed copper clad tenancy frontages and lift casings, timber wainscot panelling and marble wall cladding.

Internal planning at ground floor level is ordered around the centrally located raised entry lobby, which leads directly into the original stairhall, from which the lift and original staircase may be accessed to the west. Tenancy areas are situated on the east and west sides of the lobby and hall, and at the south end.

The entry lobby is recessed back from the main façade and accessed through a pair of glazed timber swing doors, via a set of white marble steps. The entry doors, which are original, retain bespoke metal pushplates and kickplates. Secondary stairways on either side of the main stair lead down to an external basement lobby, from which rises the aforementioned tenancy frontage, which is similarly recessed back from the main façade. The two-storey frontage uses a slightly different re-entrant configuration on basement level than ground floor level, and features ornately detailed copper cladding and geometric leadlight glazing of bespoke design. Original marble signboards, complete with black and gold painted signage lettering, are located near the ground floor vestibule entry, whilst other copper framed signboards are wall mounted within the central façade arch reveal.

Within the entry lobby, finishes comprise painted plastered walls and ceilings, decorative stepped and coved plaster cornices, and hardwood parquet flooring and joinery. Walls are lined to approximately door head height with a distinctive two-toned marble wall panelling. A decorative plaster arch, carried on cast plaster console brackets, marks the transition between the entry lobby and the stairhall, with a contemporary frameless glass airlock fitted midway between the two. The stairhall finishes generally match those of the entry lobby. On the south wall of the stairhall is an arched double doorway, which marks the entrance into the ground floor food and beverage tenancy. The doorway contains the original pair of glazed

timber entry doors with arched toplight over relocated from the now demolished main ground floor office. This space retains its original interior finishes, such as the painted hardset plaster walls, coffered fibrous plaster ceilings, decorative cornices, and timber wainscot panelling, with new services generally suspended and exposed to view. The tenancy fitout, although of recent origin, is generally compatible with the historic interior. Bevel edged mirrors of recent origin line some interior walls. Floors finishes are a mix of timber parquetry, large marble floor tiles and various resilient finishes.

The stairway shares a similar degree and style of enrichment as the entry vestibule between ground and first floor level, with dark terrazzo treads and risers, light marble dado cladding, and contrasting dark marble dado rail and splayed marble skirting. Some of the marble panels appear quite discoloured. The painted hardset plaster walls have a textured appearance in some locations. From the first floor level sub-landing upwards, finishes transition to a more functional and plain appearance. Walls are unlined, the original reinforced concrete stair simply has a paint finish, there is a moulded timber dado rail and wall stringers are painted pressed cement. Landings at each floor level are dressed in timber parquetry with moulded timber skirtings, and have brass tactile ground surface indicators fitted. Circular brass handrails and landing balustrades are generally original, although the original end volutes have been removed and new compliant end pieces fitted. The basement level retains some unpainted timber joinery, including pattern glazed interior highlight windows opposite the lift. The stairwell retains its original painted steel framed pattern glazed arched windows, although these are no longer able to transmit natural light from the now infilled former lightwell. Most retain marble sills and original casement hardware.

The stairhall shares similar finishes as the entry lobby. At ground floor level, the original bespoke copper lift casings have been refurbished to a polished copper appearance. On the other levels, including basement level, the original plaster and decorative timber pelmets have been retained with a paint finish, whilst the original sliding timber doors to the former pair of lifts are fixed into position on either side of a new central lift opening. The door to the recent lift is recognisable by its contemporary brushed stainless steel appearance. Also of recent origin are the frameless glass stairwell airlocks and the plasterboard bulkheads and offset suspended ceilings that have been introduced at each level to carry and conceal new services.

Upper level office tenancies are open plan with relatively plain interior finishes comprising painted hardset plaster walls, a combination of painted hardset plaster soffits and suspended plasterboard ceilings, and a variety of floor finishes laid over the original concrete, including some timber parquetry. Tenancy fitouts, which are all of recent origin, vary greatly across levels, although all generally have exposed or only partly concealed service interventions designed to minimise impact on original fabric. Fire separation between the office areas and the respective adjoining lift and stair halls is achieved by full height frameless glass entry assemblies of recent origin.

### **P2111 Newspaper House (1932, refurbished 2012)**

#### External form, style & details

*Newspaper House*, the easternmost building in the group, is a four-storey plus basement concrete-encased steel frame, rendered masonry and iron commercial

building, constructed in the Inter-War Stripped Classical style, with Art Deco influenced façade motifs. *Royal Insurance Co Building* abuts it to the west, and it is separated from the adjacent development to the east by a former right of way, now a cobble set and granite paved pedestrian plaza. A central two storey bridge structure that originally connected the building above ground level to Newspaper Hall at the rear, extant when the place was initially assessed in 1998, has since been demolished, along with other sundry rear additions of little significance.

The symmetrically composed front (north) façade has a strong horizontal composition comprising a definite base, central section, and sympathetically designed attic storey, complete with stepped parapet. The base, which accommodates a central arcade and four street front retail shops, has a predominantly rusticated sandstone appearance, set over a low-height faience plinth. The central and attic sections are predominantly ashlar lined, with the render slightly more yellow in hue than the base section.

The facade features a full height projecting central bay which has an original faience arch in the base section, defining the principal entrance into the ground floor retail arcade. Through the central section of the bay a deep recess is delineated by two rusticated pilasters and two giant Ionic order columns, which together support a Classically influenced entablature, with overhanging dentil cornice. The frieze retains the original cast metal letter signage 'NEWSPAPER HOUSE'. An original bronze clock, suspended from a matching cantilevered bracket which originates from the central spandrel panel, projects out over the street. The bracket retains original cut-out letters 'THE WEST AUSTRALIAN' on both its west and east face. At attic level, the central bay continues as a breakfront panel with centrally located tripartite fenestration. The bay terminates at roof level with the aforementioned stepped parapet, with its Art Deco influenced embellishments.

At street level the building is divided around the central arcade into four retail tenancies, each spaced between rusticated piers which support a rendered lintel over. Bas-relief motifs, resembling cascading water, are incorporated into the head of each pier. Shallow recessed metal sign boards are also built into the piers at eye level. Each lintel carries a corresponding tenancy letter sign which resembles traditional cast metal letter signage but is of recent origin. Contemporary frameless glass shopfronts have replaced the previous shopfronts in these retail bays. Each bay is shaded by its own full-width metal-framed striped canvas awning. These awnings comprise the refurbished original retractable frames, now fixed into a fully open position, with canvas fabric of recent origin.

Fenestration is generally ordered and rhythmic, with windows in the central section vertically paired across the two levels by a single rendered architrave, giving rise to a more vertical emphasis through this section. Openings retain their original multi-paned steel framed windows, which are generally set into deep reveals.

The façade returns to north-east by use of a curved corner, which terminates approximately one metre into the east façade. A former entrance, recessed into the curve at street level, has been modified to accommodate a contemporary fixed window, although the original granite threshold step, rendered transom and multi-paned toplight over have all been retained. The balance of the east façade is of plain rendered appearance, with a small, projecting section towards the rear clad in contemporary aluminium composite panels. Dark grey panels are used within the base section and a lighter grey used for the upper levels. In the rendered portion,

several new large openings, complete with contemporary fixed windows, have been introduced at the retail level, whilst original multi-pane steel framed windows, matching those on the main façade, have been retained at the upper levels. Windows have new fire drenches fitted over. There are no windows in the panelled section.

The two-toned composite panel theme continues around to the new south façade. Originally the utilitarian rear of the building, this façade was completely replaced during the refurbishment works and now presents to the internal pedestrian street, with a contemporary arched entry into the south stair lobby at ground floor level and projecting glazed steel canopy over. Above ground level, the façade also incorporates slightly inset sections of vertical glazing panels, corresponding to the south meeting room and tea prep areas on these levels. At roof level there is a dark metal screen enclosure, which conceals the roof-top plant and equipment mounted on the side of the main hip metal roof.

#### Internal layout and details

Internally, *Newspaper House* retains contemporary boutique retail uses at ground floor arcade level and elsewhere has been adapted for commercial office uses, including at basement level.

At ground floor level, planning is focussed around the central retail arcade, which terminates via an archway into a lift and stair lobby located at the south end of the building. Positioned on either side of the arcade, and with secondary access from it, are two of the retail shops. The original stairwell and lift shaft is located on the east side of the lobby, whilst a new lift shaft, containing two passenger lifts has been built into the wall on the right. Double doors within an original archway at the south end of the lobby lead directly onto a contemporary external bridge link, which in turn connects externally to the main plaza.

Access into the arcade is via a pair of frameless glass doors, with semi-circular toplight over, which have been built into the original faïenced entry archway. There is a fire indicator panel recessed into the wall immediately to the right of the entry doors. The arcade corridor has a plain, semi-circular vaulted ceiling, with uplighting built into the edge beams. The floor has a central treatment of black and white tessellated tiles with a two-toned terrazzo perimeter border treatment, which continues right through the lift and stair lobby to the rear entrance. Sections of the terrazzo show colour variation, indicative of later repairs and patching. The two shops that interface internally with the arcade have full height contemporary frameless glass shopfront assemblies fitted that are recessed back from the structural grid line. Little evidence remains of the original interiors within the shop tenancies, with fitouts all of recent origin.

At ground floor level, the lift and stair lobby has painted plastered walls, which incorporate a plain timber dado rail, and painted hardset plaster ceilings with no cornice. Walls are ashlar lined above the dado and smooth rendered below. Around the new lift shaft there is no skirting, however a painted masonry skirting leads into the stairwell. Both the north and south arches retain plaster haunch moulds on the interior face. Both lift doors, which are located on the west side of the lobby, are finished in brushed stainless steel. Located directly opposite the lifts on the east wall is the original lift shaft, around which the stair is built. Although the lift has been removed, and the void previously occupied by it adapted as a services riser, the original unpainted part glazed timber lift doors have been retained at each floor

level, along with their original brass hardware. At ground floor level a pattern glazed timber screen, which is offset from the wall on timber block mounts, is fixed over the new lift zone. Understood to be the top section of a former shopfront in this location, the screen retains its original unpainted appearance.

The stairwell is of similar appearance to the lobby. It contains the original reinforced concrete stair, which incorporates two landings though each level rise and is painted a traditional deep red. Brass tactile ground surface indicators and carborundum nosing strips are recent additions. The original circular timber volute handrails are extant on both sides of the stair, and the original stairwell windows now built over to the east, remain visible on the east wall from within the stairwell.

Internal planning at basement level, and at each of the upper levels, is configured around the south lobby core, with the north part of the building (corresponding to the ground floor level retail zone) occupied by large, open plan office areas. Each office level is similarly planned, and contains a contemporary drywall amenities insertion in the north section against the west wall, and a meeting room zone and tea prep zone in the south section, on either side of the lobby core.

On these levels, lobby and stairwell finishes match those on the ground floor level. Doorways leading into the open plan office areas have unpainted timber frames, transoms, toplights, and paired part glazed timber doors, with contemporary brass pull handles fitted. Other joinery is also unpainted. Contemporary full height glazed airlocks have been built into the lobby at the top of the stair flight on each level to achieve fire separation.

The amenities insertions accommodate new male, female and universal access toilets, and a long, narrow services shaft. Fixtures and finishes are all of recent origin. Some of the services shafts retain colourful graffiti, a legacy of the lengthy period when the building was unoccupied prior to redevelopment.

Within the open plan office areas, the structural grid of the columns and coffered beams can be clearly read, with each floor level sharing similar base build finishes. These comprise painted hardset plaster walls, columns and ceiling soffits, and concrete floors, over which contemporary carpet or vinyl floor finishes have been fitted on most levels. Walls have original dado bead moulds and window openings retain their original terrazzo sills and some have their original casement hardware. Most also have contemporary semi-transparent roller blinds fitted. Original, unpainted timber joinery can still be seen around the lobbies on most levels. Suspended ceilings have been retrofitted in most of the office areas for acoustic performance, however these are generally offset and/or installed as discontinuous panels, to allow the original coffered form to still be viewed above. New services are generally suspended below original substrates in exposed galvanised trays, ductwork or pipework. Individual office fitouts vary over the levels, however all are of recent origin.

### **Newspaper Hall (1932, refurbished 2012)**

#### External form, style & details

Formerly connected to *Newspaper House* via a two-storey bridge link and other sundry structures, which were demolished as part of the recent refurbishment works, *Newspaper Hall* now presents as a standalone two-storey plus basement commercial building. Adapted for food and beverage uses, the building



incorporates a new covered ground floor level drinking terrace, and a partially enclosed rooftop level bar.

Originally constructed of rendered masonry in a utilitarian Inter-War style, the simple rectangular building, which has been extended to the north and east, and upwards from roof level along its east and south edges, has been completely re-clad on all sides in aluminium composite panels to give a contemporary aesthetic across all facades, such that the original form and much of the original exterior fabric is no longer readily apparent. The original raised roof lantern, with its fixed metal framed lights and flat concrete membrane roof, remains extant at roof level.

Fenestration patterns across the facades are generally unstructured, comprising a mixture of original fixed steel framed windows and contemporary metal framed fixed windows. Original windows are generally confined to the south and east elevations and are generally set into deeper reveals than the more recent windows. Larger contemporary glazing assemblies are a feature of some of the tenancy areas, such as at basement level.

The new north addition comprises a first floor (mezzanine) level louvre-clad enclosed podium balcony, which projects northwards and slightly eastwards from the original building line over a ground floor level paved concrete deck. At basement level, a contemporary aluminium framed glass wall encloses a new tenancy area under the main plaza podium deck, which directly interfaces with the main precinct lower ground level plaza and the rear basement level of *Newspaper House*. The north addition also extends upwards from the original roof level as an open steel frame box structure, which is partially enclosed with frameless glass balustrade panels along its edges.

Slightly elevated from the main precinct plaza level, the north deck is accessed via either a ramp or set of concrete steps located at the west end, and is open to the main precinct plaza on its north and west sides, with a frameless glass balustrade edging built around the perimeter. At the east end the deck terminates into an enclosed stairwell, which provides access to the upper floor level tenancy and rooftop deck. The stair does not extend down to the basement level, which is instead accessed externally elsewhere from the precinct plaza.

Centrally located on the original north wall of the building is the former print hall main entrance, which roughly aligns with the south arched entrance at the rear of *Newspaper House*. Deeply set into a metal clad reveal, this entrance retains its original unpainted carved timber door surround, along with the original pair of glazed timber swing doors. With the former print hall now adapted for use as an upmarket bar and dining room, it remains in use as the principal entry, with the new deck on the north side functioning as a small outdoor undercover drinking area. Finishes here are dark and contemporary, comprising polished metal handrails, frameless glass balustrades, granite paving, metal wall cladding panels and dark coloured soffits.

The new east addition spans the full width of the original east façade, and extends one storey up from the original roof level, to accommodate a new internal vertical circulation and services core. At roof level, it interconnects with a new rooftop mechanical services enclosure which is located along the south edge of the building. Both additions are roofed in pre-finished metal roof sheeting and similarly clad in aluminium composite panels and metal louvres to seamlessly integrate with their respective facades. Affixed to the north-facing wall of the rooftop plant

enclosure is the original 'The West Australian' illuminated roof sign, which was formerly mounted behind the front façade parapet of *Newspaper House*. The sign is a backdrop to a new rooftop bar that has been constructed around the north and east side of the rooflight. Originally a utilitarian flat concrete deck, it now has a concrete tiled appearance. The outdoor bar service area is a separate steel framed structure positioned on the north side of the rooflight, at its west end. Patron outdoor seating areas are clustered around the outdoor bar to the north and west, with frameless glass balustrades built in around the rooflight and near the edges of the roof deck. Bar fixtures, finishes and furnishings are all of recent origin.

#### Internal layout and details

*Newspaper Hall* has been adapted for food and beverage uses and currently accommodates an upmarket bar and dining room within the former print hall at ground floor level, along with a first floor level bar and eating house, and a rooftop bar. The basement level of the original portion of the building, which is given over to staff and back of house uses, was not able to be accessed for this assessment, whilst the basement level of the new north extension currently accommodates a bakery/coffee roaster.

The somewhat unremarkable exterior appearance of the building belies the rather more remarkable interior of the former print hall, which is notable for its original Art Deco styled fixtures, fittings and decorative finishes, including copper wall sconces, spherical glass light shades, heavily moulded plaster ceilings and other decorative plastered mouldings. Some decorative elements reference those used on the main façade of *Newspaper House*, such as the 'falling water' type base relief motifs which are set off the hardset plasterwork of the main interior structural columns.

The interior layout is configured around the original main entry into the building which leads directly into the vast double volume space of the former print hall. Stairwells are located in the north-west and north-east corners, and a mezzanine gallery wraps around the south, east and west sides of a central void at first floor level. The raised roof lantern is positioned over the void and is clearly visible from both levels.

Internally the main entrance features an original unpainted carved timber doorcase, with original clock set into the timber pediment. This is a vast, open, double volume space with substantial rooflight over, overlooked by a generous mezzanine gallery at first floor level.

Within the main hall interior, the original structural grid can be clearly seen in the full height squared columns and coffered ceiling arrangement. Finishes comprise painted hardset plaster walls, soffits and spandrels, and ornate cast plaster ceilings incorporating deep coffers and dentil cornices. Walls and columns have coved terrazzo skirtings and are typically lined to dado height with unpainted panelled timber wainscots. Columns have ornate cast plaster capitals under the mezzanine, large cartouches at mezzanine level and other Art Deco-style bas relief motifs in the plasterwork. The original timber parquet flooring is no longer extant, having been replaced with contemporary tiles of granite-like appearance. The hall space features a large central bar area, which comprises most of the original public counter, with its panelled timber upstand, although the orientation of the counter has been altered to suit the new tenancy arrangement. Bar fittings, other interior fixtures and fittings, and loose furnishings are all of recent origin.

Both original stairs are of reinforced concrete construction, clad in terrazzo, with terrazzo wainscot panelling to dado height. Similar terrazzo panelling is used within the mezzanine gallery, now a lounge/dining area, to line masonry balustrades, cappings, sills, walls and columns. On the south side of the mezzanine gallery, the original board room, located in the south-east corner, has been refurbished as a private function/dining room, with original coffered ceiling, carved timber fireplace, timber doors, timber wainscot panelling and picture rails restored to original detail. Timber joinery has been left unpainted. The other former rooms along this side have had large sections of their original walls and associated timber joinery removed to open up the spaces to the mezzanine gallery. Large portions of the original north wall at this level have also been removed to open up the north side of the building to the new first floor podium balcony, with this area currently functioning as an eating house.

The rooflight contains original metal framed windows that are symmetrically arranged about the structural grid into groups. The rooflight ceiling incorporates similar coffering and decorative treatments as the main hall ceiling, and rooflight walls are similarly finished in painted hardset plaster, with large bas relief cartouches situated on the piers under each beam coffer.

At basement level, which was not able to be accessed for this assessment, finishes are understood generally unremarkable, with fitouts all of recent origin.

### 13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

When compared to its equivalent gold rush buildings (1895-1914), *WA Trustee Building* appears quite restrained, despite its claimed 'Renaissance' influences (see above). *The Royal Insurance Co Building* draws on more eclectic design influences, but retains the then typical pattern of St George's Terrace commercial development of a façade built to the street line, a raised ground floor, a grand central entrance and a tripartite façade.

*Newspaper House* repeats the pattern of St George's Terrace development but introduced one important change. Instead of a simple raised ground floor there was an arcade leading to the main hall of *Newspaper House* located behind the frontage.

The trend of the post-WWI period was, with the exception of theatres, in the direction of severe simplicity and the straight line suggested by the growing use of steel and concrete. Advantage could be taken of the structural frame superseding the load-bearing wall. The façade could now be a grid of fire-proof columns and beams, and the voids between the framing members simply filled in suggested a new basis for the design of façades.

The effect was to give rise to style impressing a sense of strength and endurance which intricate detail would only weaken. The influential Chicago architect Louis Sullivan wrote in 1896 that office buildings should have a tripartite façade, approximating the base, shaft and capital of a classical column. The ground and first floors should be given an impressive treatment befitting their close relationship to the street. Then there should be an indefinite number of storeys of standardised offices treated like a honeycomb, made "to look all alike, because they are all alike."

At the top of the building there should be an 'attic' full of tanks, pipes and lift machinery.<sup>52</sup>

During the interwar years, the Commercial Palazzo style found favour with businesses, especially banks and insurance companies, which valued conservative probity more than flashy modernity. Although examples in Sydney and Melbourne could be multiple storeys, those in St George's Terrace, prior to the erection of the CML building in 1936, were only four or five.

P1979 *Perth General Post Office* (RHP) (1923) demonstrated a "free treatment of Greek Renaissance" and,<sup>53</sup> ten years later, Forrest Place saw the erection of the P2064 *Commonwealth Bank Building* (RHP) (1933) designed on "modern classical lines". This latter has two floors clothed in granite, relieved by large arched openings containing distinctive ornamental bronze windows and doors. The upper portions of the façade were in Donnybrook stone, alternating chiselled and rusticated treatment, with classical features, comprising double columns and entablature of the ionic order.<sup>54</sup>

The visual relationship between the *General Post Office* and the *Commonwealth Bank*, despite the ten-year gap between them, is a product not only of deliberate design but of the consistent application of interwar Neo-classical architectural 'rules'. In a similar way, *WA Trustee Building*, *Royal Insurance Co Building*, and *Newspaper House* appear as a coherent precinct, referring to each other, while still having individual identities. This is, of course, both a product of the same architects designing each of them, a consistent design philosophy, and that they were all erected with a decade of each other. Although each of the commercial buildings were designed by Hobbs Smith & Forbes, all have been attributed to Sir Talbot Hobbs, although there is some conjecture that his partners may have been influential in the design of the two later buildings.<sup>55</sup>

Another possibly comparable precinct is P2031 King Street Precinct, where the individual elements combine to create a largely intact and distinctive streetscape characteristic of business districts as they developed in the 1890s and early 1900s. The individual buildings within King Street Precinct display the characteristic form of commercial buildings constructed throughout Western Australia in the Federation and interwar periods. However, the majority of these were erected as warehouses and only subsequently converted to retail and office spaces.

Murray Street, Hay Street, Barrack Street and Pier Street contain significant groups of buildings dating from the Federation and interwar periods, but there are no examples of a group of buildings presenting a consistent design philosophy all originating in a similar time period as *St Georges Terrace Commercial Group*.

William Street, Northbridge, does not demonstrate the same consistency or density of development as St George's Terrace. The remaining buildings suggest a pattern of development where prominent buildings were built at intersections and lower scale infill building took place later.

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52 Sullivan, Louis, 'The Tall Office Building Artistically Reconsidered', in Tim & Charlotte Benton with Dennis Sharp (eds.), *Form and Function: A Source Book for the History of Architecture and Design 1890-1939* (London, 1975): 11-12

53 'Buildings Old and New,' *Western Mail*, 31 August 1939: 13

54 'Commonwealth Bank,' *West Australian*, 22 March 1933: 10

55 Stannage, *People of Perth*: 230

*St Georges Terrace Commercial Group* is unique in Western Australia as a surviving consistent group of multi-storey commercial buildings from the interwar period. No other group of this period is extant on St Georges Terrace to demonstrate such fine examples of the contemporary commercial architecture.

#### **13. 4 KEY REFERENCES**

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#### **13. 5 FURTHER RESEARCH**

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