

# Heritage Impact Statement

Portland House  
8 Collins Street, Melbourne

Permit application

5 June 2025

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## 1.0 Introduction

This report to Heritage Victoria has been prepared on behalf of the owners of Portland House at 8 Collins Street, Melbourne (VHR H417). It provides an assessment of potential heritage impacts arising from the proposal for partial demolition, alterations and additions to Portland House.

## 2.0 Methodology

This heritage impact statement has been prepared with regard to the *Burra Charter* and its guidelines, as amended in 2013, and in general accordance with *Heritage Victoria Guidelines for Preparing Heritage Impact Statements* (June 2021).

## 3.0 Sources of Information

An external and internal inspection of Portland House has been undertaken, along with a review of the relevant Victorian Heritage Register documentation and the *Heritage Act*. Reference is also made to the *Conservation Management Plan 8 Collins Street (H0417)* (Lovell Chen, August 2019), Clauses 15.03 and 43.01 of the Melbourne Planning Scheme and Heritage Victoria's policy on reasonable or economic use (made and published under s19(1) of the Heritage Act 2017 in June 2021).

It is intended that this report be read in conjunction with the drawings by Techne Architecture & Interior Design.

## 4.0 History & Description

*Unless otherwise noted, historical information below is drawn from the '8 Collins Street' Conservation Management Plan (CMP) by Lovell Chen (2019).*

The building at present day 8 Collins Street was constructed in 1873 to a design by prominent Melbourne architect Lloyd Tayler. It was built by financier and politician Henry 'Money' Miller as a surgery and residence for his son-in-law Dr Aubrey Bowen. A pioneer in ophthalmology in Australia, Bowen founded the charitable Ophthalmic and Orthopaedic Institution, which eventually merged with the Melbourne Institution for Diseases of the Eye and Ear to become the Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital. He served the new hospital as honorary surgeon, committee member and advisor, and was one of the first specialists to be appointed to the Children's Hospital in 1873.

At the time Bowen's surgery and residence was constructed, the eastern end of Collins Street was a well-established locale for the medical profession. The Sands & McDougall directory of 1873 shows the street housed dozens of medical practitioners, including surgeons and homeopathic physicians, and 1887 the far eastern end of Collins Street was described as a 'highly respectable medical colony'. This social and professional standing was reflected in the size and refined style of buildings constructed for doctors in Collins Street.



Figure 1 Collins Street looking west from Spring Street, c1883. Source: State Library of Victoria.



As originally constructed, the building at 8 Collins Street had an elaborately detailed free-Classical style façade. The main three storey front envelope had a waiting room, surgery and dining room to the ground floor. The first floor contained a large drawing room and a bedroom with additional bedrooms to the second floor. A double storey rear wing was located along the western side of the property.

The building has undergone various changes since its initial c1873 construction, summarised as follows in the CMP:

- 1888 - extension of north service wing and construction of outbuilding to courtyard.
- 1921 - extension of a section of the north wing and construction of internal staircase.
- Unknown date - extension of first-floor room (F4) and second floor room (S5) over canted bay window on ground floor.
- 1928 - alteration of service wing, enclosure of external verandah and reconfiguration of internal space with rooms to the east and an internal corridor to the western boundary. Alteration of ground floor north wing to accommodate vehicle parking and outbuilding extended to create a caretaker's flat.
- 1946 - internal partitions to north wing.
- 1965 - demolition of the caretaker's flat and part of north wing, extension of first-floor to the east boundary, including two lightwells. Alterations to ground floor structure to support new first floor. Windows to ground floor Collins Street façade replaced with shopfront. The building became known as Portland House at this time.
- 2009 - a lift and gantry installed in south light well.
- Unknown date - internal partitions, new bathrooms and kitchens

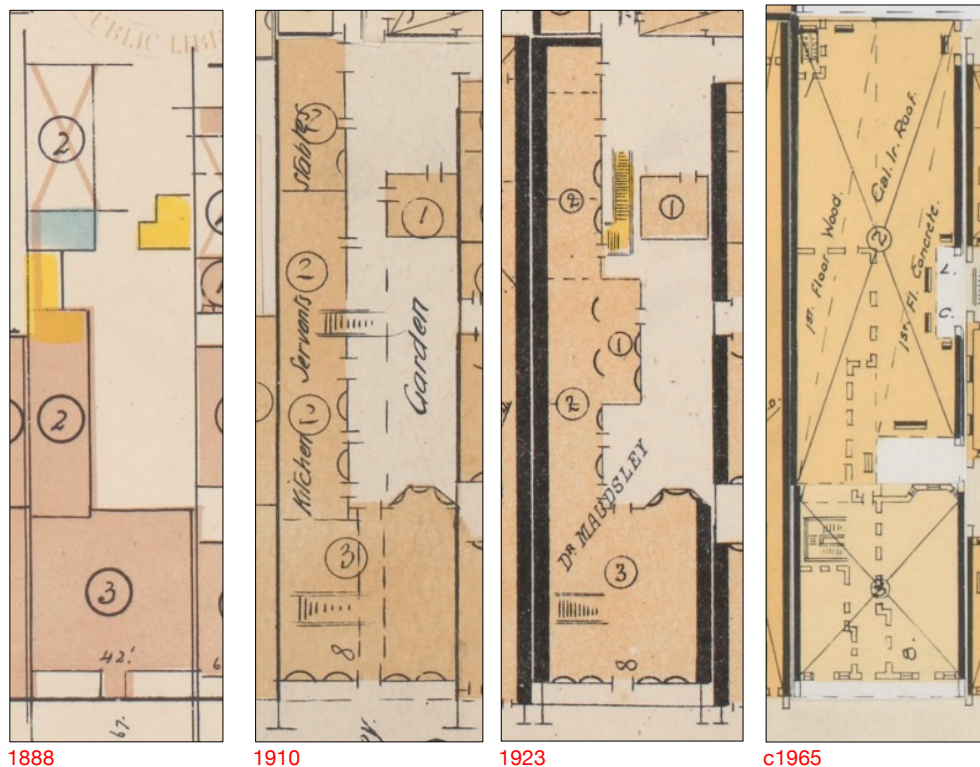


Figure 2 Mahlstedt fire insurance plans showing the evolution of Portland House, most notably to the rear or north. Source: State Library of Victoria.



*Figure 3* 1956 photograph of the Collins Street façade showing the original ground floor windows either side of the main entrance. Source: State Library of Victoria.



*Figure 4* The Collins Street façade, 1978, with shopfronts having replaced the ground floor windows. Source: City of Melbourne

## 5.0 Description

Portland House is comprised of the original three storey front envelope addressing Collins Street, and a heavily altered and extended double storey rear wing, with the majority of built form to the rear dating from the 1960s. The rendered masonry free-classical style façade has a symmetrical composition consisting of three bays, with a central entry portico.

As discussed above, the original metal palisading fencing either side of the main entrance were removed and ground floor windows replaced by shopfronts in the 1960s. The panelled timber doors and fanlight to the main entry are also non-original. The upper levels of the façade are substantially intact.

The western half of the rear wing incorporates remnants of the original rear service wing within gable roofed 1928 additions that have themselves undergone substantial change. The eastern half of the rear wing was erected 1965 and is separated from the north elevation of the front envelope by a light well. A second light well is located further along the east boundary, mirroring the lightwell of the adjoining Anzac House.

As described in the CMP, the interiors of the front wing have been substantially altered and refurbished. The original timber staircase off the main entry foyer has been retained and most rooms retain original plaster cornices and joinery, albeit with appreciable damage to a number of the cornices and to other finishes. The front portion of the second floor has been divided into offices and the walls lined in non-original timber panelling.



Figure 5 (left) The Collins Street façade.

Figure 6 (right) The roof of the rear wing looking north.





Figure 7 (left)

*The ground floor of the north elevation with the original bay window.*



Figure 8 (right)

*The north elevation of the front wing at first floor level. The 1920s addition is visible to the left with a c2009 door and windows.*



Figure 9

*The north elevation of the front wing at the second floor. The flat roofed section is a 1920s addition fitted with modern doors. The c2009 lift is visible to the far left.*



Figure 10 (right) The ground floor garage looking south.

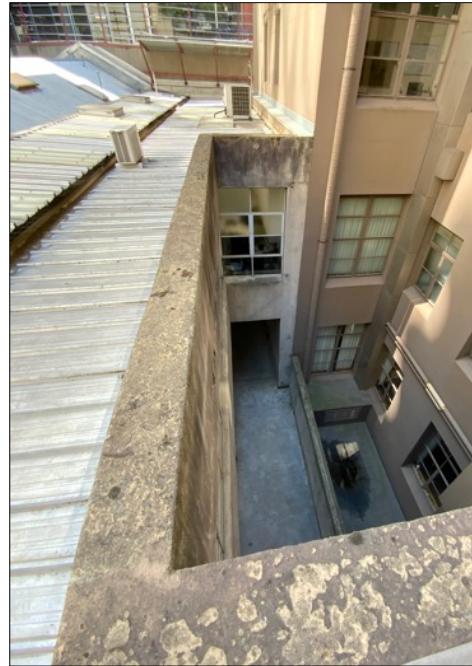


Figure 11 (left) The lightwell to the rear 1965 additions with Anzac House partially visible to the right.



Figure 12 (left) 1873 ground floor plan. Source: Reproduced from the Portland House CMP.

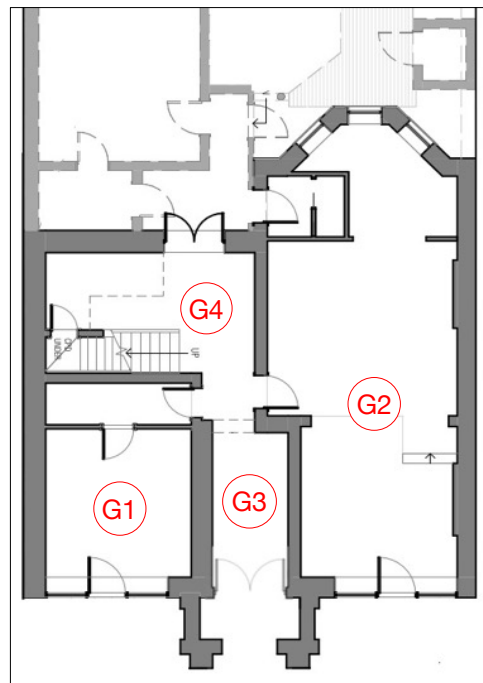


Figure 13 (right) Existing ground floor plan to the front portion of the building.



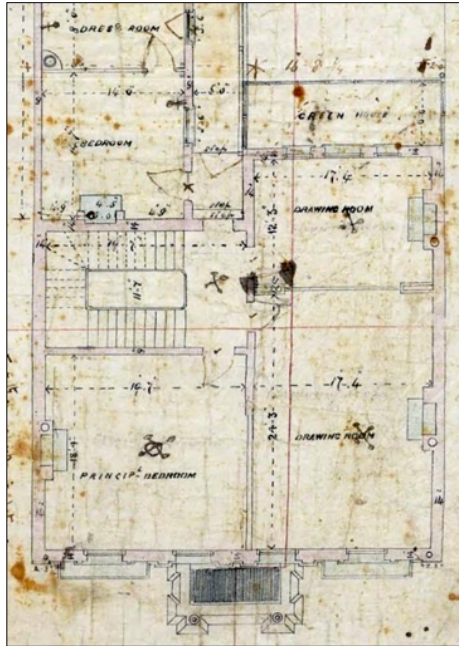


Figure 14 (left) 1873 first floor plan. source: Reproduced from the Portland House CMP.  
Figure 15 (right) Existing first floor plan.

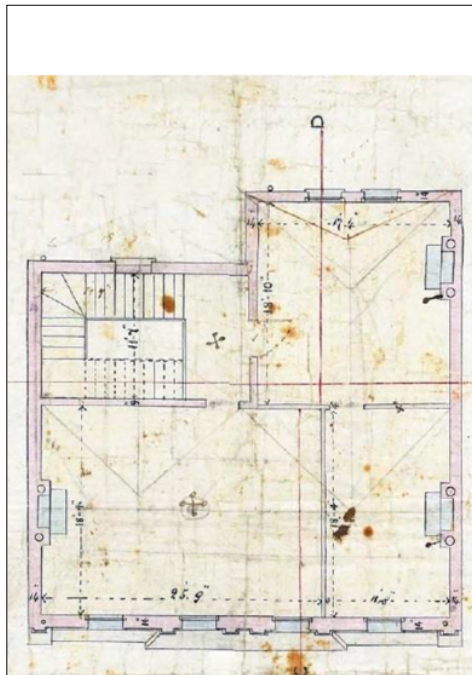
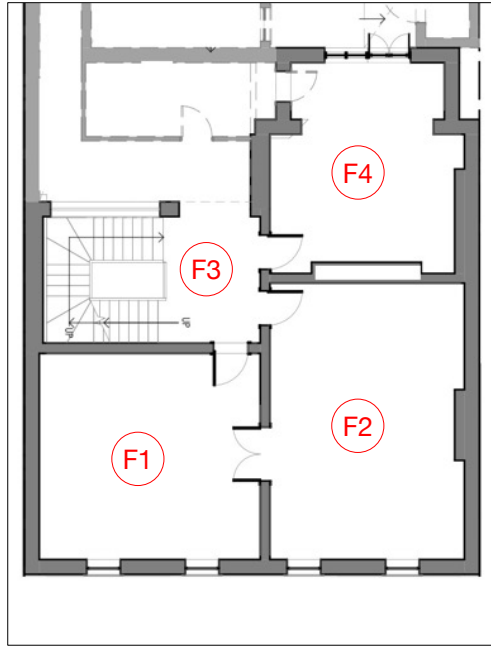


Figure 16 (left) 1873 second floor plan. source: Reproduced from the Portland House CMP.  
Figure 17 (right) Existing second floor plan.

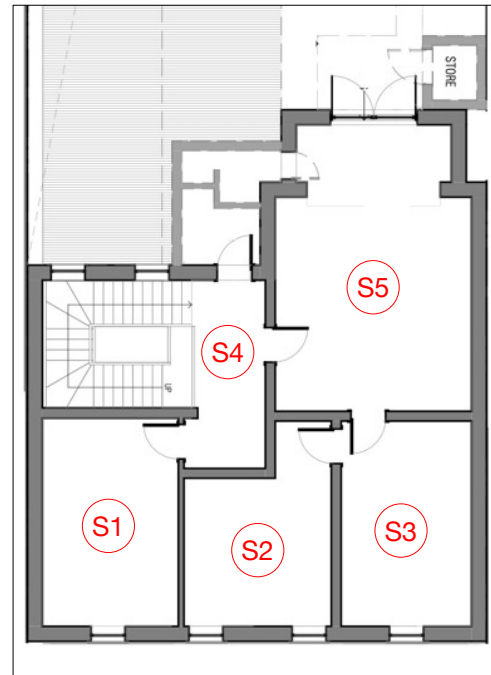




Figure 18      *The main stair hall (Room G3).*



Figure 19      *First floor office (Room F1).*





Figure 20 Original internal door opening in Room F2, infilled with a bookshelf/cabinetry.



Figure 21 The main stairs at the first floor. .





Figure 22 (left) Rooms S1 looking south.



Figure 23 (right) Room S2 looking south. The timber wall panelling dates to 1965.



Figure 24 Room S5 looking north to the 1920s additions with c2009 glazed door.

## 6.0 Heritage Listings

### *Heritage Victoria*

Portland House is included on the Victorian Heritage Register as place H0417. The permit exemptions policy for Portland House identifies all of the original front portion, included the interior of the front entrance foyer, as being of primary significance. All interiors (other than the front foyer) and all of the rear two storey wing are of no significance (refer figure 25 below).

Portland House is also listed on the Heritage Inventory (HI No. H7822-1767). The inventory is a list of all known non-Aboriginal archaeological sites. These sites cannot be disturbed without consent from Heritage Victoria.

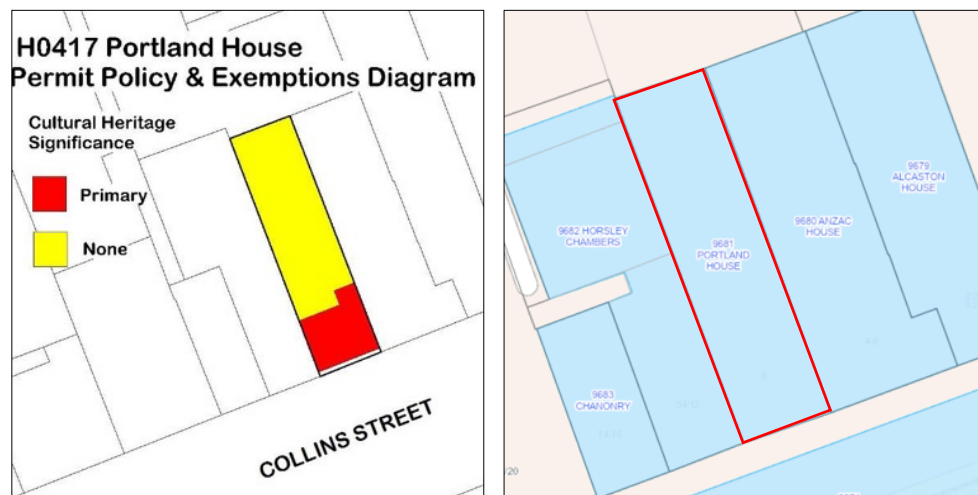


Figure 25 (left) *Heritage Victoria's diagram showing levels of significance within the extent of registration for Portland House.*

Figure 26 (right) *Map of the site and its environs with Heritage Inventory listings shaded blue*

### *City of Melbourne*

Portland House is listed on the Heritage Overlay Schedule to the Planning Scheme as HO45. The site is also located within HO504, *Collins East Precinct*. It is nonetheless recognised that the Responsible Authority with regard to heritage matters within the extent of registration is Heritage Victoria, and Council will have a role as a referral body.

### *National Trust of Australia (Victoria)*

Portland House is classified by the National Trust (File No. B1817).

## 7.0 Significance

As set out in the statement of significance endorsed by Heritage Victoria, Portland House is considered to be significant for the following reasons:

*What is significant?*

*Portland House was erected in 1872 to the design of prominent architect Lloyd Tayler. It was built by Henry 'Money' Miller for his daughter, Jane and son-in-law Dr Aubrey Bowen, as a townhouse and surgery. It is a three storey brick and stucco structure with centrally located Doric style portico with engaged columns. The first storey is elaborately decorated with Classical elements including segmental pediment window hoods, fluted pilasters, Ionic capitals and a heavy cornice with bracketed modillions supported by volute brackets. The shopfronts incorporated into the ground floor are later additions.*

*How is it significant?*

*Portland House is of architectural and historical significance to the State of Victoria.*

*Why is it significant?*

*Portland House is architecturally significant as one of the few remaining mid Victorian townhouses in the central city area. It is an example of Classicism in a transitional style before the so-called boom period. It is a notable example of the domestic work of prominent and prolific Melbourne architect Lloyd Tayler.*

*Portland House is historically significant for its close associations with the medical profession. It is associated with the occupancy of notable Melbourne physician Sir Henry Maudsley.*

## 8.0 Permit Exemptions

Additional to the general permit exemptions that apply to all places on the Victorian Heritage Register, specific exemptions are provided for Portland House, inter alia:

*General Condition 3*

*All works should be informed by Conservation Management Plans prepared for the place. The Executive Director is not bound by any Conservation Management Plan, and permits still must be obtained for works suggested in any Conservation Management Plan.*

*Specific exemptions*

*Works and alterations to the following buildings and features are permit exempt:*

- *All non-structural works to the interiors of the 1872 building (not including the entrance foyer) excluding the internal structure required to support the building.*
- *Demolition of the rear two storey wings.*
- *All internal works to the rear two storey wings.*
- *All external alteration of the two storey wings (excluding new construction).*

## 9.0 Proposal

The proposal involves the retention of the original three storey front wing to Collins Street and demolition of all of the double storey rear built form. A new building envelope is to be constructed at the rear of the site, separated from the retained heritage fabric by a courtyard. The courtyard is elevated above ground floor carparking and covers a significant portion of the site, providing a landscaped open space.

The proposed two level office envelope is located at the rear or north end of the site, sitting above a ground level car park accessed from the rear laneway. A stair and lift core on the west boundary will provide access to a first floor staff lounge and second floor office space with a double height void to the south side. The new building envelope abuts part of the side elevation of Anzac House along its eastern boundary, covering one of its windows.

Works to the Collins Street façade are generally limited to new fabric awnings to the ground floor shopfronts and a fire booster cabinet situated near the west shopfront, on the side wall of the adjoining building. The cabinet is to be detailed to blend in with existing wall surfaces. The currently painted rendered surfaces to the heritage façade are to be repainted a grey tone, emulating the unpainted render finish that survives within the original rear fabric of the building and that is believed to have been the original finish to the front façade also. The timber joinery to first and second floor windows and the metal railings to the first floor balconettes are to be repainted a dark grey colour, interpretive of the dark trims typically used on nineteenth century buildings. Skylights to the main roof are to be removed and replaced with roof cladding to match existing.

A new skylight is to be introduced above the main stair, replacing a recessed reveal within the ceiling that appears to have previously supported a pendant light. A pendant light will be reinstated below the new skylight, above the stairs.

The north (rear) elevation will be stripped of modern accretions including balconies. The c1920s arched openings to the first and second floors will be fitted with new glazed timber framed doors. These doors will open onto new balconies with a spiral staircase providing access from the ground floor. New balconies will also be erected on the western half of the north elevation with simply detailed metal balustrading. The rear elevation will then be fully repaired/renewed with an unpainted light grey render finish.

The interiors of the retained three storey front wing will undergo minimal change. Modern floor tiles in the entrance lobby will be replaced. A zone for fire and electrical services is to be introduced below the main stair, within new cupboards.

In terms of the upper levels, where internal works are permit exempt, some non-original internal walls to the second floor offices will be partially demolished to create new door openings that will improve the functionality of these spaces. Non-original built-in joinery/cabinetry will be removed and the original internal door opening between rooms F2 and F4 reinstated. Some fireplaces will be reinstated to both the first and second floors. A number of the original cornices to the first floor

have been damaged or are in bad condition – these will be renewed to match the original cornice design.

## 10.0 Analysis

Applications for works to places on the Victorian Heritage Register are considered within the broad ambit of considerations under the *Heritage Act 2017*, which seek to conserve the significance of place, whilst also support their sustainability and taking into account economic impacts. Inter alia, the *Heritage Act* provides the following directions regarding the matters to be considered in the determination of permit applications:

*101 Determination of permit applications*

*(1) After considering an application the Executive Director may—*

*(a) approve the application and—*

- (i) issue the permit for the proposed works or activities; or*
- (ii) issue the permit for some of the proposed works or activities specified in the application; or*

*(b) refuse the application.*

*(2) In determining whether to approve an application for a permit, the Executive Director must consider the following—*

*(a) the extent to which the application, if approved, would affect the cultural heritage significance of the registered place or registered object;*

*(b) the extent to which the application, if refused, would affect the reasonable or economic use of the registered place or registered object;*

*(c) any submissions made under section 95 or 100;*

*[...]*

*(f) any matters relating to the protection and conservation of the registered place or registered object that the Executive Director considers relevant.*

*(3) In determining whether to approve an application for a permit, the Executive Director may consider—*

*(a) the extent to which the application, if approved, would affect the cultural heritage significance of any adjacent or neighbouring property that is—*

- (i) included in the Heritage Register; or*
- (ii) subject to a heritage requirement or control in the relevant planning scheme; or*

*(b) any other relevant matter.*

Apropos Section 101(2)(a) of the Heritage Act, the proposal will have no adverse effect on the significance of Portland House. It is a key consideration that the proposal is mostly concerned with the redevelopment of the non-significant rear of the site. Notably, the extent of change to the site as a whole is far less than would have resulted from the previously approved multi-storey scheme. The new building envelope as currently proposed has a modest three storey scale and will be entirely concealed in views from Collins Street. The scheme also benefits from the introduction of a generous central courtyard providing a physical separation between (much of) the original and new built forms. The courtyard also echoes the late-nineteenth century layout of the site with a yard to the northeast of the house, complete with a fountain and open space.

The full demolition of the double-storey rear wing is an acceptable outcome on the basis that it is heavily altered with most fabric dating to the 1960s. It does not contribute to the significance of Portland House. Moreover, full demolition of the rear wing was approved under the existing permit.

The existing permit also allows for the demolition of the 1920s additions to the first and second floors of the rear elevation. To the extent that the present scheme proposes a lesser degree of change and on the basis of this fabric having already been altered (c.2009), it is reasonable to allow further change to the doors on this elevation at the first and second floors.

In accordance with the permit exemptions policy described at Section 8.0 of this report, the current proposal has been informed by the Lovell Chen CMP. The proposal responds to the CMP policies as follows.

- *Retain and conserve fabric of primary significance to the former residence and surgery, 8 Collins Street, Melbourne.*

Complies. The proposal retains the original three storey front wing with a high degree of integrity, with most changes confined to the already altered rear elevation.

- *Retain and conserve evidence of early planning and layout of interior spaces and early detailing, where identified as being of primary significance*

Complies. The CMP generally identifies the plan form and original decorative elements in all rooms within the three storey front envelope as being of primary significance. Surviving original internal plan forms and fabric are generally retained throughout the interior of the front wing. Minor demolition works will occur in the second floor to create new internal openings. These works are acceptable having regard for the altered state of these rooms. It should also be noted that Heritage Victoria's permit exemptions policy identifies all interiors of the front wing (other than the front foyer) as being of no significance.

- *Fabric and areas of contributory significance should preferably be retained and conserved, though provide greater flexibility with alteration and adaptation*

Complies. The CMP identifies the following items as being of contributory significance: the Collins Street shopfronts, the rear elevation of the main three storey wing, and remnant parts of the rear service wing. The proposal retains the shopfronts, and most of the rear elevation. It is noted that that Heritage Victoria's registration documentation does not identify the remnant rear wing as being of any significance. Full removal can be considered acceptable in that Heritage Victoria's levels of significance takes precedent over the CMP.

- *Fabric of little or no significance can be altered, adapted or demolished*

Complies. The CMP identifies the rear wing as being of little or no significance. It will be demolished.

- *The siting, form and scale of any new development should have regard to maintain the visual primacy of the building at street level.*

Complies. The proposed development will be entirely concealed from Collins Street.



- *The future use (or uses) of 8 Collins Street should be compatible with the assessed values of the place so that its cultural significance is maintained and conserved.*

Complies. The works allow the longstanding use of the place as offices to continue whilst providing modern standards of amenity.

- *Future development of 8 Collins Street should have regard to the identified heritage values.*

Complies. The proposed development is subservient to the heritage building envelope to the front wing. The physical separation created by the new courtyard enhances the legibility of the front wing as three dimensional envelope. The works do not remove or obscure fabric that is integral to the architectural significance of the place.

The place's historically significant associations with the medical professions and notable Melbourne physician Sir Henry Maudsley are not threatened by the proposed development – in that the associations are not directly demonstrated in the surviving plan form and fabric to any great extent, and the proposal retains the fabric that is most representative of the Maudsley period.

- *Retain the external form and presentation of the Collins Street elevation with minimal change.*

Complies. As noted, some minor changes are proposed involving the installation of awnings to the shopfront and of a fire booster cabinet (the latter is a mandatory requirement with no suitable alternative location, the rear laneway not being accessible to fire/emergency vehicles).

- *Any proposed paint scheme to the exterior of the building requires a detailed paint analysis and preference given to reinstating the nineteenth century colour palette*

No detailed paint analysis has been undertaken to date, but a surface investigation by means of paint scrapes has revealed that the building has been painted numerous times, with a slate grey (or similar) being a relatively recent application, ie this appears to be the paint tone below the present cream colour.

A review of historic photographs, such as those at Figures 3 and 4 above, suggests that the facade may not have been painted until the ground floor shops were introduced in the 1960s – the associated works may have warranted painting of the facade to make the changes and associated patching to the façade render less apparent. Having regard for this, the proposed grey tone is a reasonable option, being a tone that has previously been applied (most likely in recent decades, ie during the period of registration) and one that is reflective of the general character of unpainted nineteenth century render.

It is also apparent that the recent paint layers are modern acrylic paints. Perhaps as important as the choice of palette in terms of appearance is the type of paint. It is recommended that the proposed repainting be of a mineral silicate application (eg Keim or Murobond) rather than an acrylic paint in order to recover a flat appearance more akin to that of unpainted render than is achieved with modern acrylic paints.

In summary, the proposed paint scheme is interpretive of the nineteenth century façade presentation and is supported as a reasonable option for this building.

- *The treatment to the existing openings (main entrance door, windows, shopfronts) should reflect the building's original nineteenth century residential use.*

Generally complies, being that no changes are made to the facade openings. Retention of the shopfronts reflects the longstanding streetscape presentation dating back to the 1960s, and more generally demonstrates the historical evolution of the east end of Collins Street from residential/medical to commercial uses. While the works associated with the existing permit included reinstatement of some elements to the front of the site, ie ground floor windows in place of shopfronts, and front fencing, this is not proposed within the context of the present, more modest proposal for the site.

- *Retain and conserve the rendered chimney and roof form of the southern wing*

Complies.

- *If the roof is to be replaced consider the replacement of the existing roof sheeting with slate*

Re-slatting of the roof is not proposed. It can be considered a discretionary, non-essential heritage outcome given that the roof is fully concealed from Collins Street.

- *Retain the early planning layout of rooms in the south wing*

Complies. New internal openings proposed for the second floor will not confuse a reading of the original plan form, accepting that a number of changes have already been made to the plan form with the introduction of new internal walls.

- *Any original decoration in interior spaces should be retained*

Complies.

- *The main stair void and staircase should be retained.*

Complies.

- *Provide interpretation of the history and significance of the building within a publicly accessibly place*

An interpretation strategy could be devised as a condition of permit.

Turning again to matters of the *Heritage Act*, the Executive Director must consider the extent to which the application, if refused, would affect the reasonable or economic use of the registered place or registered object. When considering the matter of reasonable use, the Executive Director may consider (1) the historic, recent and current uses of the registered place or object, (2) other compatible uses of the registered place or object, (3) the context and setting within which the place or object is located, and (4) other relevant matters.

In terms of item (1), the proposal works allow for the longstanding office use of the place to continue. As discussed above, the retention of ground floor shopfronts is consistent with the streetscape presentation dating back to the mid 1960s. The proposed uses are therefore compatible with the significance of the place. The works to the rear can also be seen to be appropriate to the context and setting within which the place is located – ie the rear built form



context is defined by existing non-significant additions in the midst of a heavily built up central city environment.

The above notwithstanding, the requirement under the *Heritage Act* to consider the effect of refusal on the reasonable or economic use of a place arises in practical terms only in the context of the Executive Director considering a refusal in relation to s101[2] (a), (c) or (f) of the Act. If there is no basis to consider refusal, ie refusal of the application does not arise in relation to these other matters, then consideration of the impact of refusal would be a redundant action. In the present instance, the proposal is supported on the basis that it will do no harm to the registered place, regardless of reasonable or economic use considerations.

Additional to matters of reasonable or economic use, the Heritage Act requires consideration of the impact of the works on adjacent or neighbouring places that are on the Victorian Heritage Register or the Heritage Overlay Schedule. Portland House has registered buildings to its immediate east and west sides – ie Anzac House at 4-6 Collins Street (VHR H0415) and Victor Horsley Chambers at 12 Collins Street (VHR H0474). Portland House is also located within the Collins East Precinct (H0504).

Whilst the proposed new built form abuts and covers one of the boundary windows of Anzac House, it is of note that the previously approved scheme sought to build up against the entirety of the eastern boundary, essentially covering all four windows to that part of Anzac House. The current scheme only covers a small part of this side of Anzac House, comprising a utilitarian side elevation. As such, the proposal will not undermine the basis for Anzac House's inclusion on the Register as a restrained and dignified Georgian revival interwar building associated with the RSL.

The east elevation of Victor Horsley Chambers (abutting Portland House to the west) is a blank, featureless wall. The partial concealment of this wall by the proposed new built form will have no adverse heritage impacts on the significance of Victor Horsley Chambers.

Nor will the works impact the broader Collins Street East Precinct, given that only minor works are proposed for the façade of Portland House, with the new building envelope to the rear being entirely concealed. The key attributes of the precinct, as defined by the consistent height, scale, character and appearance of the nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings in the Collins Street streetscape, are not affected.

## 11.0 Conclusion

The proposed works to Portland House are appropriate with regard to heritage considerations.

The removal of the existing non-significant rear wing will have no heritage impacts and is consistent with the recommendations outlined in the CMP, as well as Heritage Victoria's registration documentation.

The proposed landscaped courtyard, which creates a separation between Portland House and the proposed building to the north, is a positive outcome allowing legibility of the retained heritage envelope.

The works are in keeping with key policies for conservation and the proposed additions represent a better and lesser extent of change than what was contemplated in the existing approval for the site.

The proposal should therefore be considered acceptable having regard for the identified significance of the registered place and the provisions of the *Heritage Act*.

