



24 April 2025

Attention: Sarah Craig, Director
Hellenic Museum
280 William St
Melbourne VIC 3000

c/- Andronas Conservation Architecture
Attention Trudy Rickard

Dear Sarah,

Former Royal Mint – Letter of Archaeological Advice

Introduction

This letter constitutes the preliminary archaeological advice for The Former Royal Mint (H0770) and Royal Mint (H7822-0132) ahead of Hellenic Museum Pavillion works at 280-318 William Street, Melbourne. The proposed works comprise the replacement of the current concrete slab with a similar slab incorporating cantilevered edges. It is anticipated that the works will require the removal of 200mm of ground disturbance.

This advice has been prepared by Laura Campbell and reviewed by Emily Simons.

Heritage Listing and Controls

The site is protected under the Heritage Act 2017 through its inclusion on the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) as Former Royal Mint H0770, the Victorian Heritage Inventory (VHI) as the Royal Mint H7822-0132. It is also included on the Heritage Overlay as HO758.

Victorian Heritage Register

The site is included on the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) as Former Royal Mint H0770 for its historical and architectural significance to the state of Victoria.

What is significant?

The Former Royal Mint was designed by John James Clark of the Public Works Office. Design work began in 1869 and it was built during 1871-72 by the contractors William Murray and Company of Emerald Hill, and Martin and Peacock of West Melbourne. The complex originally contained coin production facilities, administration and residential quarters and associated structures, but all that remains now are the two-storey office building and residence, two gate-houses, perimeter walling and

Extent Heritage Pty Ltd
extentheritage.com.au
ABN 24 608 666 306
ACN 608 666 306

Sydney
L3, 73 Union St
Pyrmont NSW 2009
T 02 9555 4000

Melbourne
L1, 52 Holmes St
Brunswick East VIC 3057
T 03 9388 0622

Brisbane
L2, 109 Edward St
Brisbane QLD 4000
T 07 3051 0171

Hobart
L3, 85 Macquarie St
Hobart TAS 7000
T 03 6144 5880

palisading. The main two storey building is a rendered brick structure on a heavy rusticated base. Unlike the Palladian norm, the piano nobile is on the ground floor. The first floor features paired ionic columns, while an attic storey features oval windows. The perimeter wall is an imposing brick construction with large wrought iron gates and iron lamps.

How is it significant?

The Former Royal Mint is of historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Former Royal Mint is of historical significance because of its important role in the economic, financial and political development of Victoria for nearly 100 years. Lobbying for a mint to be established in Australia began soon after the discovery of gold. Such an institution was considered by its proponents not only as an efficient way of providing currency for the colonies, but as an important sign of colonial independence and maturity. As such it reflects the growing wealth and confidence of gold-rush era Melbourne. As a branch of the Royal Mint, London, it initially bought gold and minted only gold sovereigns until 1916. The first Australian silver coins were minted in 1916, after the Federal Constitution gave the Commonwealth sole powers in the minting of coinage. The first Australian pennies and halfpennies were produced in 1927. When the Sydney Mint closed in 1926, the Melbourne Royal Mint became the only mint in Australia until it ceased operations in 1968. The Former Royal Mint is of architectural significance as one of the most impressive 19th century government buildings in Victoria, and for its associations with John James Clark. The administration building was styled after Raphael's Palazzo Vidoni-Caffarelli in Rome (1515). Its restrained ornamentation and dignified portico reflect the prestigious yet functional nature of the Mint. It is one of the finest examples of conservative classicism in Australia. Clark (1838-1915), who had a distinguished career in the office of the Colonial Architect (later Public Works Department) from 1852, when he was 14, until 1878, was responsible for designing a number of important colonial government buildings including the Government Printing Office (1856) and the Treasury (1857). He later went on to design major buildings in Sydney, Brisbane and Perth.

Victorian Heritage Inventory

The site was also included on the Victorian Heritage Inventory (VHI) in 1992 for its potential to contain historical archaeological features, deposits and artefacts relating to the former use of the site as the Old Exhibition Building and the Melbourne Royal Mint from 1872.

Archaeological testing and investigations have previously been undertaken in 2001, 2015, 2018 and 2024 on various parts of the site including the central courtyard, the administration



buildings, the southern gatehouse, the external wall foundations and the workshops and furnace of the quadrangle. The archaeological works have demonstrated that the site has high potential to contain archaeological features associated with the former Royal Mint.

The following is a revised Statement of Significance adapted from the Extent Heritage 2015 and 2018 Historical archaeological reports.

What is significant?

The Former Royal Mint site comprises archaeological features, deposits and artefacts that relate to the construction and use of the Royal Mint from 1872. The site is likely to contain archaeological deposits and features relating to the Old Exhibition building that was constructed on the site in 1854.

How it is significant?

The Royal Mint site is of historical (Criteria A), for its potential to contain information about the minting process and the use of the Old Exhibition Building (Criteria C) at a local and state level.

Why it is significant?

The Former Royal Mint archaeological site is significant at the local level, for the following reasons:

The site was developed as the Exhibition Hall in 1854 century during the height of the Victorian Gold Rush. This depicted Melbourne as a global city with technology, trade and industry to showcase to the world. In 1872 the site was developed into the Melbourne Royal mint, which reflected growing wealth and confidence in Melbourne and Victoria. The mint is of *'historical significance because of its important role in the economic, financial and political development of Victoria for nearly 100 years'*. (Criterion A).

The Royal Mint site contains intact archaeological features, deposits and associated artefacts that relate to the processes and activities of the Royal Mint, Melbourne. Minting practices are rare in an Australian context, with the other Royal Mint being present in Sydney (Criterion C).

Summary of Archaeological Values

The works area is confined to the Pavillion or Central Courtyard area of the Former Royal Mint Site, within the internal space of the Old Exhibition Building and later the central courtyard of the quadrangle (see Map 1). The quadrangle was established in 1872, and the central

EXTENT

courtyard provided an outdoor space for the Royal Mint and a space for the Deputy Master's children to play.

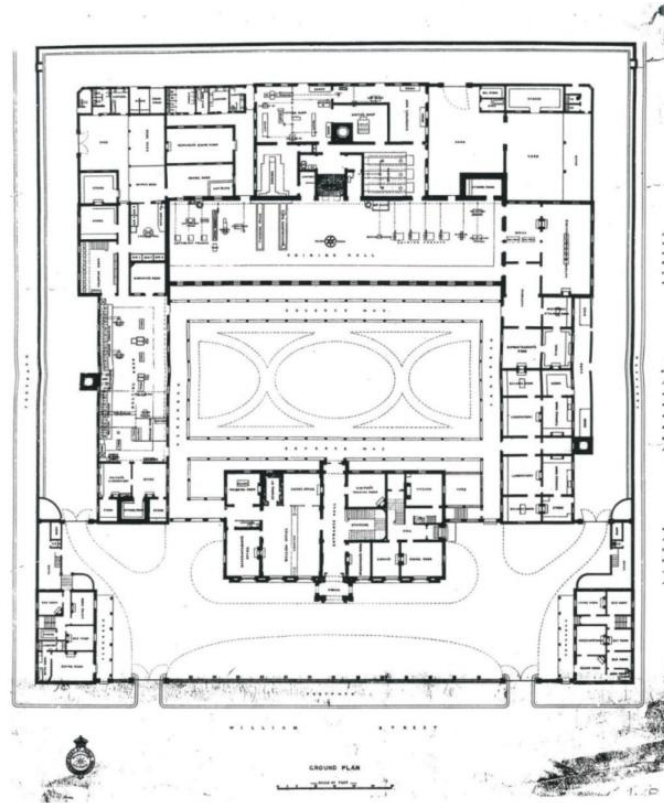


Figure 1: 1870 J. J. Clark Architectural Plan showing the central courtyard within the quadrangle.
Source: Public Works Department Archives. held by the former Department of Infrastructure Records Office, cited in HLCD, 1999: Appendix 2, figure 13

Extent Heritage Pty Ltd
extentheritage.com.au
ABN 24 608 666 306
ACN 608 666 306

Sydney
L3, 73 Union St
Pyrmont NSW 2009
T 02 9555 4000

Melbourne
L1, 52 Holmes St
Brunswick East VIC 3057
T 03 9388 0622

Brisbane
L2, 109 Edward St
Brisbane QLD 4000
T 07 3051 0171

Hobart
L3, 85 Macquarie St
Hobart TAS 7000
T 03 6144 5880



Figure 2:1873 C. Nettleton Photograph, 'Quadrangle looking North West of Royal Mint'. Source: SLV

During the construction of the M pavilion in 2015 a fountain/ fishpond feature was unearthed and recorded by AHMS archaeologist, Adrian Burrows (AHMS 2015, p. 1). The location of the feature was “*further north of that shown on the MMBW plan, centred on the rear exit of the former Mint administration building, whereas that shown on the MMBW plan was noticeably 2-3 metres off-centre to the south.*” (AHMS 2015, p. 2). The distance between the fishpond and the rear exit of the former Mint administration building was noted to correlate precisely at 8 metres. Figure 8 shows an overlay of the MMBW plan and the works area supporting this assessment.

The feature comprised 2 courses of un-frogged brick, cemented into place forming a smooth rounded join between the concrete base and the interior of the raised brick rim. The upper brickwork did not form a ‘finished’ surface indicating that the upper portion of the pond was likely truncated post-use, demolishing the structure to ground level. Based on observations at the time, excavation works may have caused cracking in the waterproof plaster. Given the material of the pond comprised of concrete, it is likely the pond was subject to alterations throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth century. A service pipe (probably water) installation was cut into the eastern side of the structure. The structure did not have deeper foundations, or a visible construction cut below the brickwork and concrete but rather rested directly atop the existing soil horizon.

Foundation trenches excavated ahead of construction works for the new pavilion did not contain any evidence of structural remains. The soil profile comprised of levelling fill, likely introduced as part of the construction of the Royal Mint after the demolition of the Old

EXTENT

Exhibition Building. Figure 9 shows that the pond feature is aligned with the rear threshold indicating that the structure and central courtyard gardens underwent a number of changes throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

This pond feature was retained as part of the former pavilion works and underlies the current structure and concrete slab.

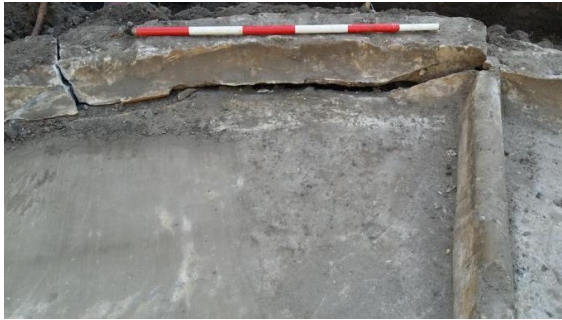


Figure 3: Fishpond structure in detail looking west (AHMS 2015)



Figure 4: Detail of concrete, brick and plaster edging, with hemispherical partition on the right (AHMS 2015)



Figure 5: Fishpond looking south-west towards the former Mint building (AHMS 2015)

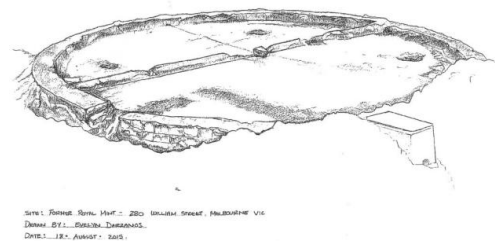


Figure 6: Illustration of fishpond, looking south-west (source: E Darzano 2015).

EXTENT



Figure 7: Historical overlay showing works area with 1854 Bibb Plan of Melbourne.

Extent Heritage Pty Ltd
extentheritage.com.au
 ABN 24 608 666 306
 ACN 608 666 306

Sydney
 L3, 73 Union St
 Pyrmont NSW 2009
 T 02 9555 4000

Melbourne
 L1, 52 Holmes St
 Brunswick East VIC 3057
 T 03 9388 0622

Brisbane
 L2, 109 Edward St
 Brisbane QLD 4000
 T 07 3051 0171

Hobart
 L3, 85 Macquarie St
 Hobart TAS 7000
 T 03 6144 5880

EXTENT

EXTENT

PEOPLE CENTRED HERITAGE

Former Royal Mint Archaeological Assessment

-  Victorian Heritage Inventory - H7822-0132
-  Victorian Heritage Register - H0770
-  Works area

Historical overlay - 1893 MMBW

Drawn by: Alexander Murphy
 Checked by: Laura Campbell
 Date: 16/04/2025
 Projection: GDA 1994 MGA Zone 55
 Data sources: Extent, Nearmap, DEECA, GA, Bot, Kudos
 LGA: Melbourne
 Parish: Melbourne North



0 10 20
Metres

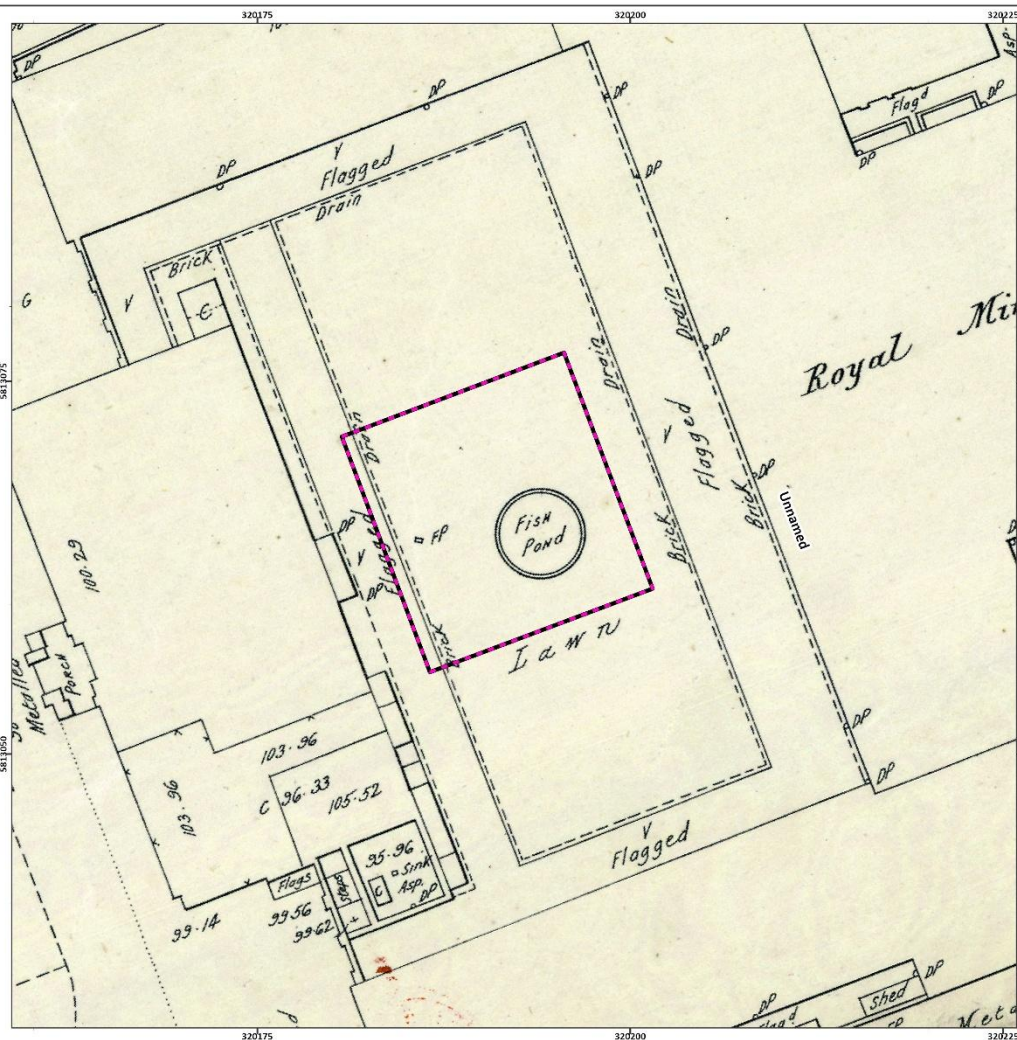


Figure 8: Historical Overlay showing works area in red and the 1885 Melbourne Metropolitan Board of works Plan.

Extent Heritage Pty Ltd

extentheritage.com.au

ABN 24 608 666 306

ACN 608 666 306

Sydney

L3, 73 Union St

Pymont NSW 2009

T 02 9555 4000

Melbourne

L1, 52 Holmes St

Brunswick East VIC 3057

T 03 9388 0622

Brisbane

L2, 109 Edward St

Brisbane QLD 4000

T 07 3051 0171

Hobart

L3, 85 Macquarie St

Hobart TAS 7000

T 03 6144 5880

EXTENT

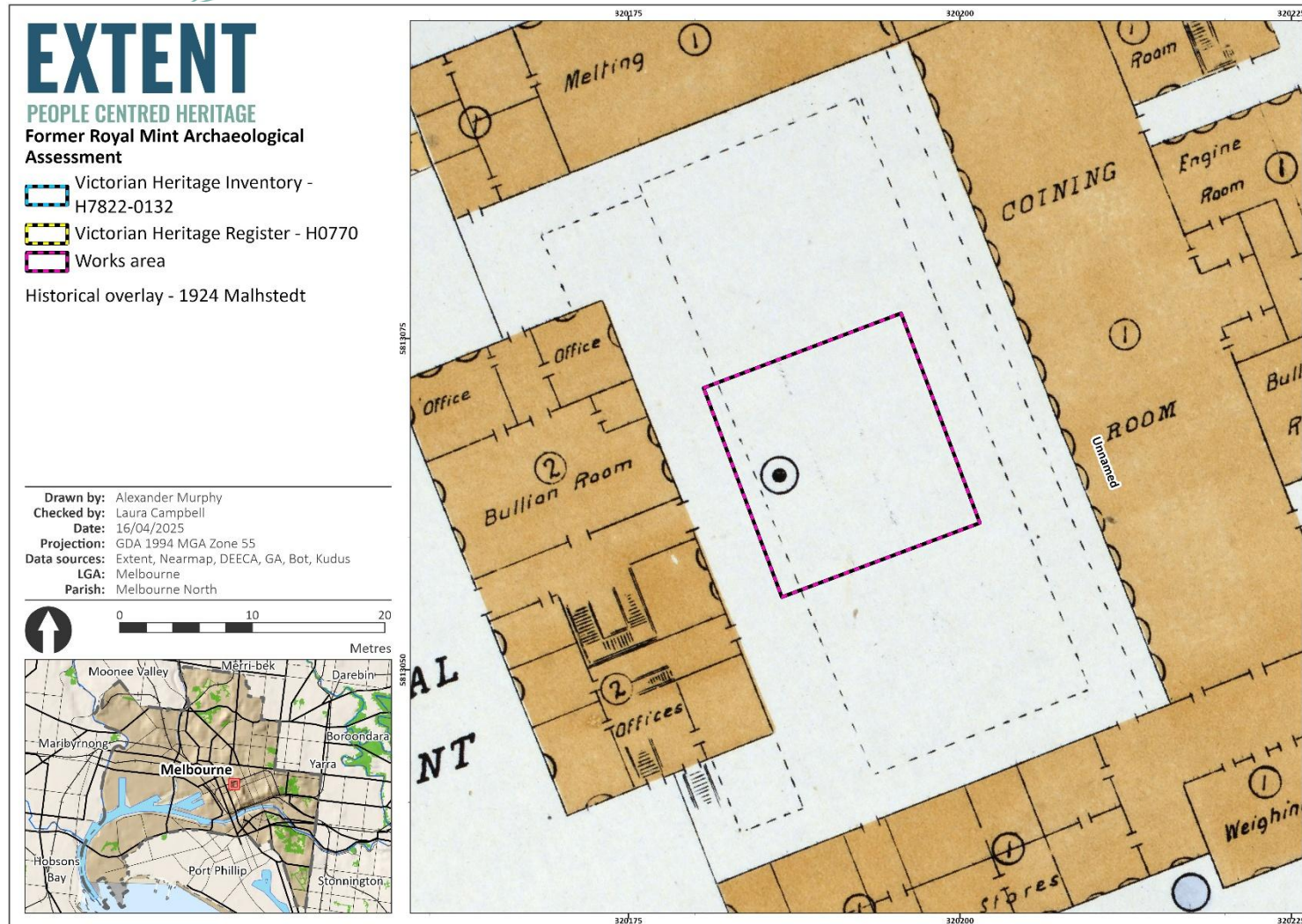


Figure 9: Historical Overlay showing works area in red and 1924 Mahlstedt Fire Insurance Plan:

Extent Heritage Pty Ltd
extentheritage.com.au
ABN 24 608 666 306
ACN 608 666 306

Sydney
L3, 73 Union St
Pyrmont NSW 2009
T 02 9555 4000

Melbourne
L1, 52 Holmes St
Brunswick East VIC 3057
T 03 9388 0622

Brisbane
L2, 109 Edward St
Brisbane QLD 4000
T 07 3051 0171

Hobart
L3, 85 Macquarie St
Hobart TAS 7000
T 03 6144 5880

Proposed works

The proposed works are outlined in plans provided by Bot Engineering provided on the 15th of April 2025 (25032 – Hellenic Museum Pavillion – Structural – I1) include structural upgrades to the Hellenic Museum pavilion ground slab. The planned ground works include.

- Removal of the existing floor slab including steel frame
- Retention of beams and screw piles
- Construction of new slab with 1m cantilever of 1m to all sides.

It is anticipated that 200mm of fill will need to be removed in the area of the slab measuring approximately 10m by 10m, likely through mechanical excavation. The new ground slab configuration is anticipated to be N12-200 top and bottom, both directions on 0.2mm polythene membrane over 50mm sand bed and utilise the foundation trenches and piles associated with the old pavilion structure. A Geotechnical Consultant may be required to conduct a foundation investigation to ascertain depth and condition.



Figure 10: Overlay of works area with current ground layout. The pond feature is shown in dark grey.



Assessment of Impact

The proposed works are unlikely to expose intact historical archaeological features associated with the function of the Royal Mint, including with and within the quadrangle. Isolated artefacts may be present within the central courtyard and levelling deposits, however as this part of the site has already been subject to modification it is unlikely.

The works propose to excavate 200mm of fill as preparatory ground works prior to slab construction in conjunction with the removal of existing steel framing. The proposed depth is unlikely to expose historical archaeological features associated with the Former Royal Mint, quadrangle or Old Exhibition Building.

The removal methodology of the slab is subject to discussion with the contractor. Removal of the existing structure surrounding the known feature will need to be agreed in collaboration with Heritage Victoria as part of the heritage protection plan, conditioned in the permit.

Recommendations

The archaeology works can be managed through conditions outlined on the Heritage Act Permit. Please note that any geotechnical works can be conditioned as part of the permit or conducted as part of a permit exemption. An historical archaeological consent will not be required as the historical archaeological values relate to the Former Royal Mint occupation of the site, and additionally historical archaeological features are unlikely to be impacted.

Based on the limited impacts of the proposed works to uncover or harm historical archaeological features relating to the Royal Mint excavations should occur with an Unexpected Finds Provision conditioned within the Permit, to manage any discoveries made during the course of work, and to mitigate any delays.

It is understood that the management of the remnant pond feature will be conditioned as part of a Heritage Management Plan (with a likely exclusion zone). Once the ground works are completed, a site inspection should be undertaken with a short letter report being submitted to Heritage Victoria, to confirm the location of the pond/fishpond feature and ground conditions.

Yours sincerely,

Laura Campbell

Senior Heritage Advisor – Historical Archaeology | Extent Heritage Pty Ltd

Extent Heritage Pty Ltd
extentheritage.com.au
ABN 24 608 666 306
ACN 608 666 306

Sydney
L3, 73 Union St
Pyrmont NSW 2009
T 02 9555 4000

Melbourne
L1, 52 Holmes St
Brunswick East VIC 3057
T 03 9388 0622

Brisbane
L2, 109 Edward St
Brisbane QLD 4000
T 07 3051 0171

Hobart
L3, 85 Macquarie St
Hobart TAS 7000
T 03 6144 5880

