



URBIS

HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT

Uniqlo Expansion Emporium
287 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

Prepared for
TRG
27 June 2025

URBIS STAFF RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS REPORT WERE:

Associate Director, Heritage	Kim Roberts		
Senior Heritage Consultant	Sebastian Dewhurst		
Heritage Assistant	Nathan Lewis		
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND

Urbis has been engaged by TRG The Retail Group to prepare the following Heritage Impact Statement (HIS) to accompany a Heritage Victoria Permit for proposed works to the property located at 287 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne (the 'subject site').

The subject site is included on the Victorian Heritage Register as the Former Myer Emporium (H2100) and is identified as B2. Spanning a large site between Bourke and Lonsdale Streets, the former Myer Emporium is a significant historical and architectural landmark in central Melbourne.

The part of the subject site impacted by the current scope of works contains the Uniqlo store, which is set to expand into the adjoining, soon-to-be-vacated retail store currently occupied by Glue. This expansion will provide Uniqlo with additional shop frontage to Lonsdale Street.

The proposed works include:

- Two (2), 2500mm x 2500mm digital LED panels to the inside ground floor shopfront glazing.
- Three (3), 750mm x 750mm digital cubes fixed to ground level façade under the existing canopy.
- Eight (8), 2815mm x 2855mm electronic signs behind existing windows to Level 2.

Further details of the proposed works are included in Section 5.

This HIS has been prepared to determine the potential heritage impacts of the development on the heritage significance of the subject site. A detailed impact assessment of the proposed works has been undertaken in Section 6 Discussion of this report.

1.2. SITE LOCATION

The subject site is located at 287 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne within the Local Government Area of the City of Melbourne, on Wurundjeri Country. The site is legally described as Lot 1 on Deposited Plan PS638807.

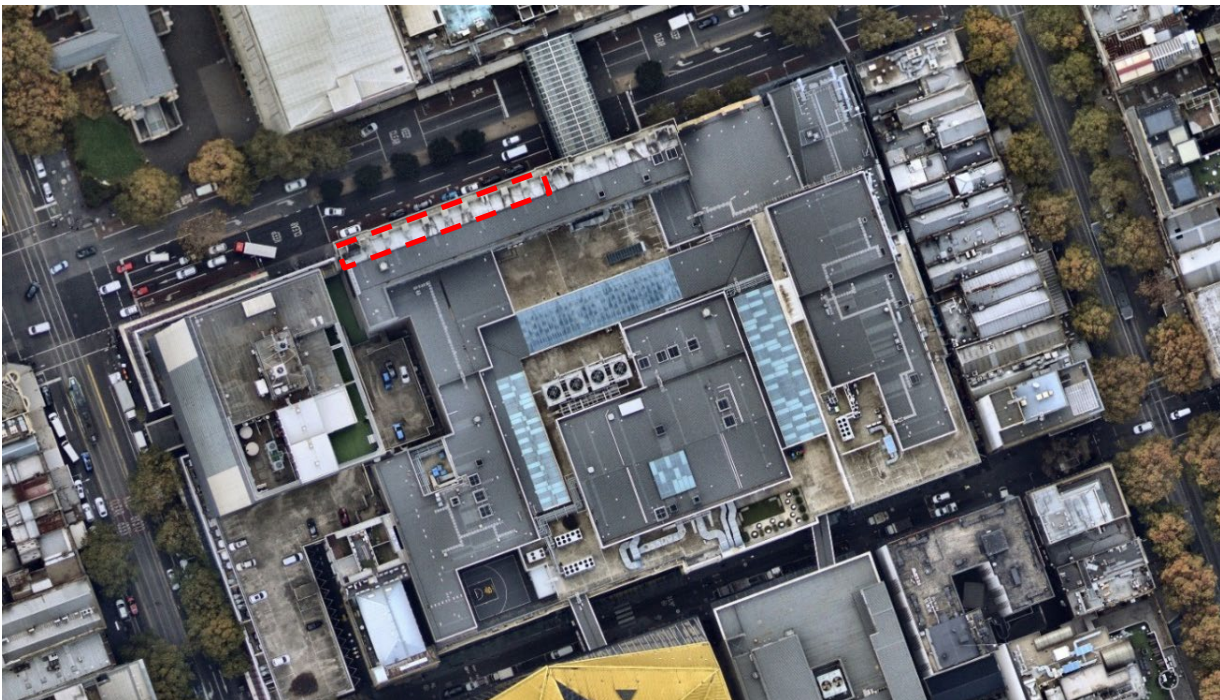


Figure 1 - Location map showing the current works area subject to the current application (red).

Source: Nearmap aerial photography, June 2025.

1.3. SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND LIMITATIONS

This Heritage Impact Statement draws upon a site inspection conducted on 20 June 2025 and review of the relevant documents, including the citations for the Former Myer Emporium held in the Victorian Heritage Register and the Register of the National Trust. Any other resources are footnoted throughout.

Table 1 – Proposed Plans

Author	Dwg No.	Drawing Name	Rev.	Date
TRG	TP000	Cover Page	A	23/06/2025
TRG	TP001	Site Plan	A	23/06/2025
TRG	TP002	Existing Elevations & Site Photos	A	23/06/2025
TRG	TP003	Proposed Signage Location & Key Plan	A	23/06/2025
TRG	TP004	Proposed Signage Plan, Section & Elevation Sheet 1	A	23/06/2025
TRG	TP005	Proposed Signage Elevations Sheet 2	A	23/06/2025
TRG	TP006	Proposed Signage Elevations Sheet 3	A	23/06/2025
TRG	TP007	Signage Schedule	A	23/06/2025

1.4. AUTHORSHIP

The following report has been prepared by Sebastian Dewhurst (Senior Consultant) and Nathan Lewis Heritage Assistant. Dr Kim Roberts (Associate Director) has reviewed and endorsed its content.

Unless otherwise stated, all drawings, illustrations and photographs are the work of Urbis.

2. DESCRIPTION

2.1. SUBJECT SITE

The Myer Emporium on Lonsdale Street is a large multi-storey department store building constructed in stages from 1925. The building was designed by H.W. and F.B. Tompkins and engineered by W.J. Grassick. The building showcases Classical and Beaux Arts architectural styles, marked by a vertical emphasis with tall, narrow uniformed window bays, wide overhanging cornices, and stylised classical detailing. Built from reinforced concrete and steel, the building is finished with a light-coloured render (Figure 2).

The building façade facing Lonsdale has a generally flat parapet which is punctuated by three stepped projecting elements, each capped with slender vertical flagpoles. Large, stylised letters spelling "MYER'S" are set along a plain frieze beneath a wide overhanging cornice. A row of stylised classical laurel wreaths is spaced evenly along the vertical pilasters. Vertical metal MYER lettering extends to the parapet (Figure 2).

The mid-section of the street-facing façade is dominated by tall, narrow pilasters that rise uninterrupted from the second to the top floor, lending the building its characteristic vertical emphasis. These pilasters frame regularly spaced recessed window bays, many of which have been infilled or screened. There is a projecting sculptural clock supported by a decorative bracket in the central bay (Figure 2).

Extensive changes have been made to the ground floor facades, including the installation of new shopfronts and the addition of cantilevered glazed awnings at the first-floor level. The altered shopfront windows have contemporary black metal framing and a non-original bronze band to the base of the frame. The original lighting and signage have also been extensively altered. Further alterations include the addition of a contemporary elevated pedestrian bridge, which connects the Bourke and Lonsdale Street stores over Little Bourke Street at the first, second, third and fourth floor levels (Figure 2).

The windows to Level 1 and Level 2 have been repurposed as display windows. Paired mannequins have been installed behind the level 1 windows. To level 2, the windows at either end have backlit branded signs, while the six windows in between have decals on the interior side of the glazing. All have coloured lighting which illuminate the windows now used as displays when the light dims late in the day and at night.



Figure 2 – Subject site, being ground to Level 2 of the west end of the former Myer building on Lonsdale Street.



Figure 3 – Detail of the area affected by the current application viewed from the west – highlighted in red.



Figure 4 – Detail of the area affected by the current application viewed from the east – highlighted in red.

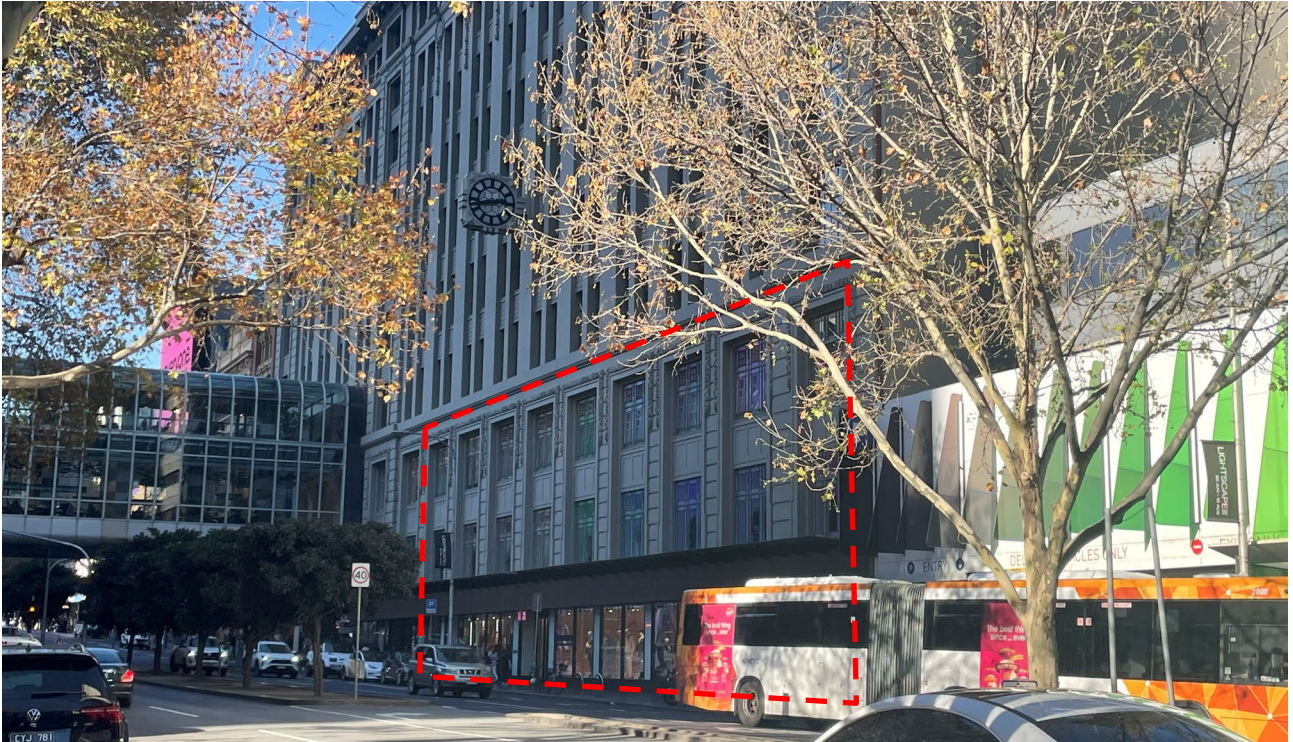


Figure 5 – View of the subject site from the west near the intersection of Lonsdale and Elizabeth Street – highlighted in red..

2.2. CONTEXT

The subject site is located within a dense commercial environment. The immediate vicinity is dominated by contemporary commercial ground floor shopfronts. These have large expanses of glazing, branded signage, highly visible shop displays and views into the shop interiors. The ground floor shopfront fenestration is composed independently from the pattern of fenestration to the upper floors of the upper levels of the heritage façades.



Figure 6 – Commercial tenancy to the west of the subject site.

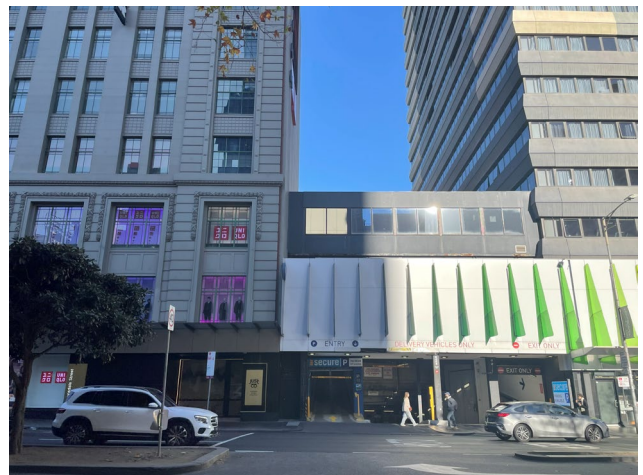


Figure 7 – Interface between the commercial tenancy to the west and the subject site.



Figure 8 – Altered part of the Myer Lonsdale Street building further west on Lonsdale Street.



Figure 9 – Commercial buildings further west on Lonsdale Street.

3. HISTORY

3.1. AREA HISTORY

The area now known as Melbourne has for millennia been the Country of the Wurundjeri people. The Wurundjeri People speak the Woiwurrung language and take their name from the Woiwurrung word 'wurun' (Manna Gum) and 'djeri', (a grub found in or near the Mann Gum), both common along 'Birrarung' (Yarra River) which snakes through their country.¹

Wurundjeri Country includes a vast tract of land that stretches from the Werribee River in the west to the upper reaches of the Yarra (Birrarung) and Thompson Rivers in the east. This land is heavily watered with creeks and tributaries, including the Emu, Merri, Moonee, Deep and Darebin Creeks in addition to the Birrarung. This provided the Wurundjeri with numerous food and material supplies which encouraged the development of a complex culture.

The Wurundjeri are tied via language to the adjacent Wadawurrung, as well as other clans who together form the Kulin language nation. Together the Kulin nation's country covers much of present-day Melbourne with which the Kulin people share a continuing tradition and connection.

3.2. SUBJECT SITE HISTORY

The Myer Melbourne Department Store was established on Bourke Street by the Belarusian immigrant Sidney Myer in 1911 following the success of his drapery business in Pall Mall, Bendigo with his elder brother, Elcon Myer.²

Myer began a programme of expansion in the central city with the acquisition of the long-established business of Wright and Neils in 1911. The company constructed the Bourke Street Emporium, inspired by San Francisco's Emporium, in 1914 and Myer's (Melbourne) Pty Ltd. was established three years later 1917.³

The newly created company would continue to expand its physical presence in Melbourne by purchasing and developing new buildings in Post Office Place, Flinders Street, Bourke Street and Lonsdale Street. Notable buildings acquired by the company in their expansion includes several notable buildings, such as the Robertson & Moffat Buildings (designed by Crouch & Wilson and William Salway respectively), the Slatter's Building and the Clarke's Building, both designed by Nahum Barnet.⁴

In 1922, Myer's acquired the drapery establishment Robertson and Moffat on Bourke Street for between £400,000 and £500,000. This merger unified two leading drapery department stores under one control. The staff of Robertson and Moffat, approximately 600 employees, were retained. The merger enhanced customer access between the Myer buildings and the newly acquired premises.⁵

In the late 1920s, the Myer Emporium undertook a major expansion along Lonsdale Street with the construction of the subject building to Lonsdale Street. Plans were enacted for a 10-storey building with a basement, significantly boosting the Emporium's presence along Lonsdale Street. This new development would extend the total frontage to 200 feet, covering over one-third of the block between Swanston and Elizabeth Street. The building, designed by the firm's architects HW and FB Tompkins, would feature innovative construction methods and layout designs inspired by American department store buildings. The estimated cost of the project was around £100,000. The expansion, purchased at approximately £750 per foot, introduced several innovative construction methods and layout features. The use of a steel frame and other advanced techniques marked a new era in the development of retail spaces in Melbourne.⁶ The building was completed in 1929. On completion, Myer occupied a huge area of land in the central city (see Figure 11).

¹ Wurundjeri Wo Wurrung Cultural Aboriginal Heritage Corporation website, <https://www.wurundjeri.com.au/our-story/ancestors-past/>.

² Stella M. Barber, 2008. *Myer*, eMelbourne: the city past & present, School of Historical & Philosophical Studies, University of Melbourne, <https://www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM01037b.htm>

³ Butler, G. 1965, *Myer Emporium, 273-321 (part) Lonsdale Street, Melbourne*.

⁴ Victorian Heritage Database, 'Citation', 314-336 Bourke Street and 275-321 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne.

⁵ The Argus, 1922. *Large Drapery Merger*.

⁶ The Argus, 1928, '*Lonsdale Street Building*'.

Plans for an extension of the Lonsdale Street building were raised in the mid 1930s but never eventuated.⁷

In 2012 an extensive program of works was undertaken to the entire block between Lonsdale and Little Bourke Street as part of the Emporium development. These works involved the full demolition of the former 'Myer New Store' except for the street facing facades. The works were complete in 2014 with only a shallow façade retained and substantial new shopping centre constructed behind.

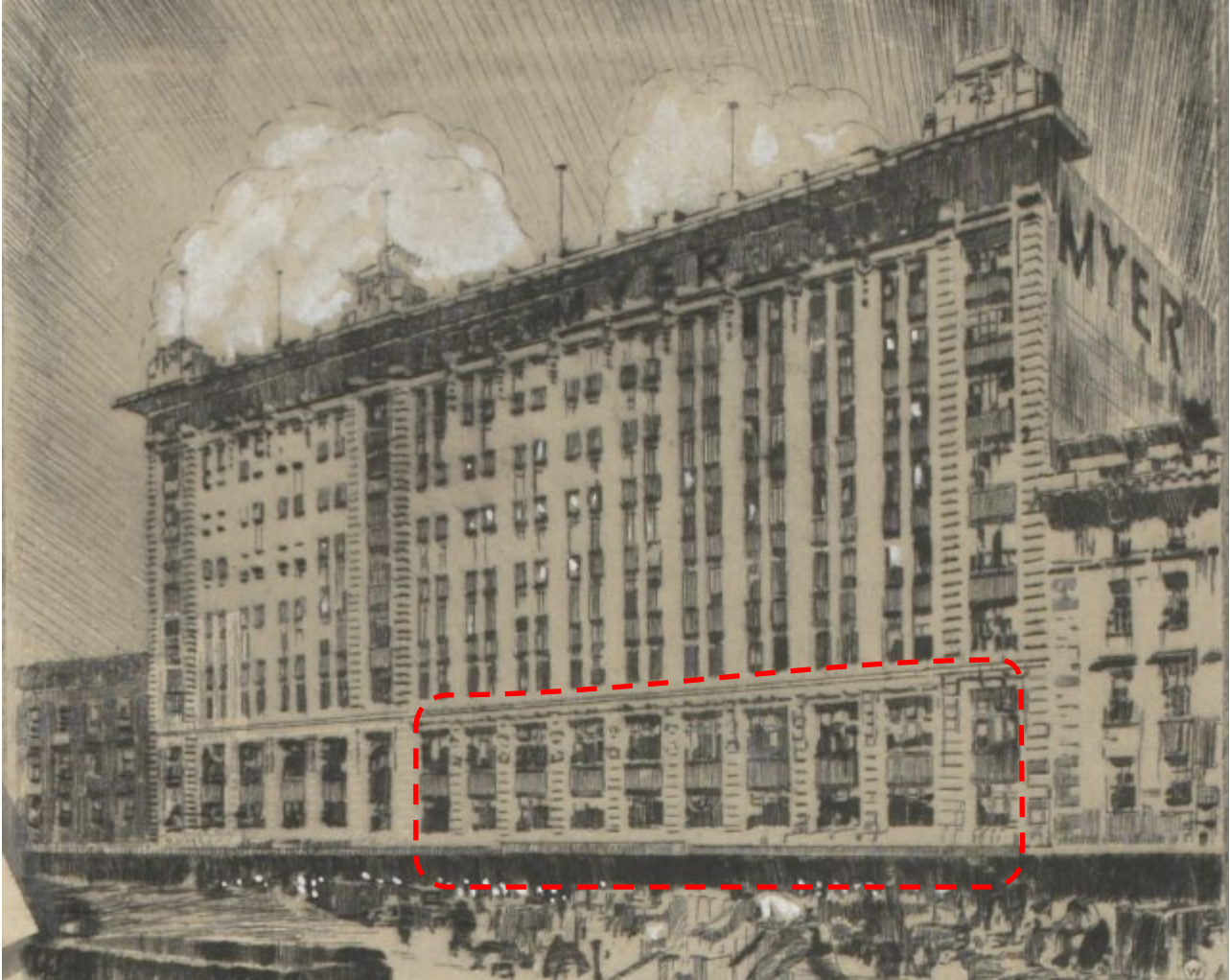


Figure 10 – The Lonsdale Street Frontage in 1929. The current location of the Uniqlo tenancy is highlighted in red.

Source: Wade, Stuart E. (1929) *The Myer Emporium Ltd. Bourke St. Melbourne Vic. Aust. (Collage)*.H2006.150/3

⁷ The Argus, 1934. 'New Building for Myer Emporium', .

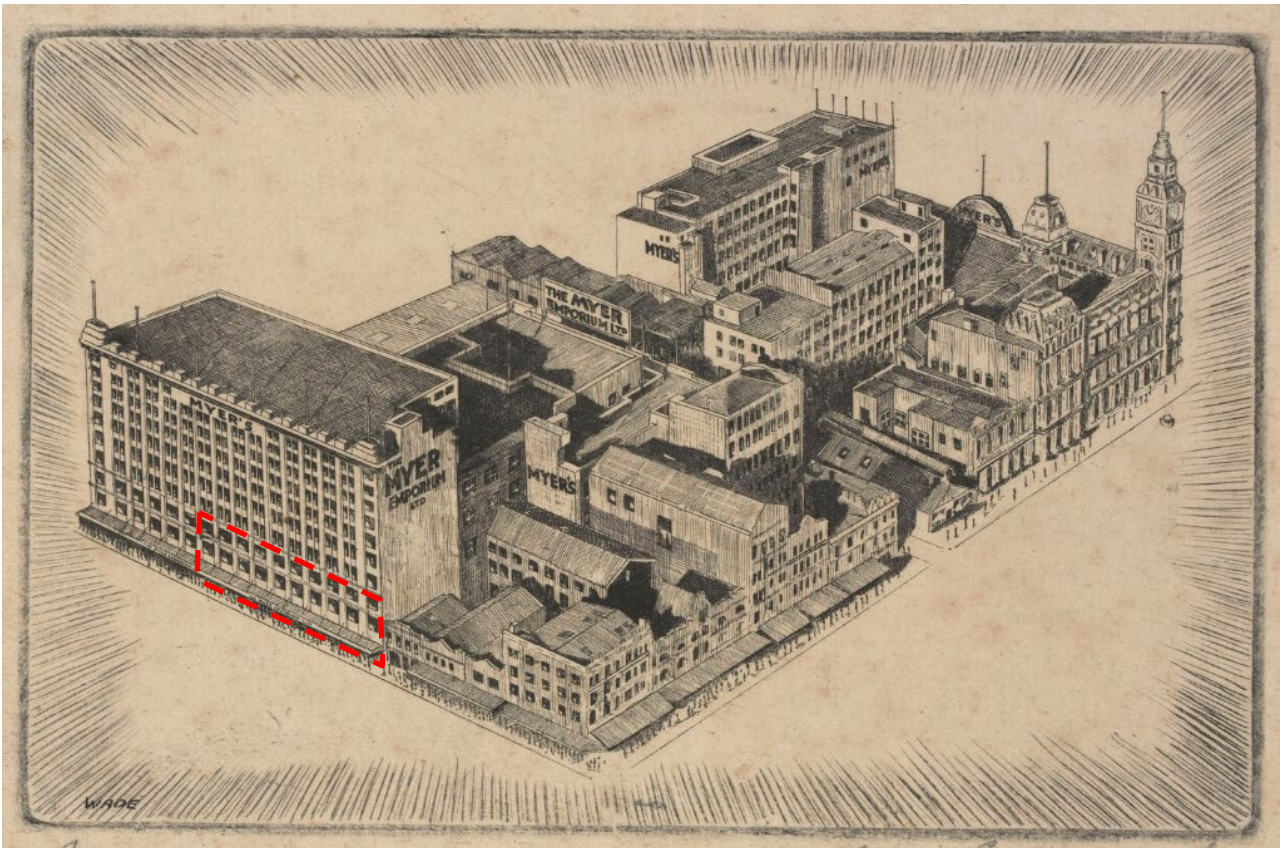


Figure 11 – Aerial view of the blocks bounded by Lonsdale, Elizabeth and Bourke Streets looking southeast (as of 1929). The current location of the Uniqlo tenancy is highlighted in red.

Source: Wade, Stuart E. (1929) *The Myer Emporium Ltd. Bourke St. Melbourne Vic. Aust. (Collage).* H2006.150/3



Figure 12 – 'Made in Australia Week' Crowds, Lonsdale Street (c.1930).

Source: *The Argus*.

4. HERITAGE LISTING & CONTROLS

The following listings and controls apply to the subject site.

4.1. VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER

The site is included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) H2100 as a place of individual significance to the State of Victoria. The listing covers all the buildings marked B1 and B2 and land being the footprints of B1 and B2 on Diagram no. 2100 held by the Executive Director. B1 Building bounded by Bourke Street and Little Bourke Street. B2 Building id bounded by Lonsdale Street and Little Bourke Street (Figure 13).



Figure 13 – H2100 Myer Emporium Final Extent Plan, including subject site (indicated dashed red).

Source: Victorian Heritage Register.

As heritage places that are included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) are subject to the requirements of the Heritage Act 2017, no planning permit is required to develop a registered heritage place pursuant to Clause 43.01-3 of the Melbourne Planning Scheme (aside for applications for subdivision).

Permit Exemption Policy

The following is the permit exemption policy for the former Myer Emporium (H2100):

General Exemptions: General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017. Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must notify the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence. Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a

planning permit granted under Part 4 of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required. Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions. Find out more about heritage permit exemptions here. Specific Exemptions: General Conditions: 1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object. General Conditions: 2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible. Note: All archaeological places have the potential to contain significant sub-surface artefacts and other remains.

In most cases it will be necessary to obtain approval from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria before the undertaking any works that have a significant sub-surface component. General Conditions: 3. All works shall be in accordance with the Conservation Management Plan endorsed by the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria provides guidance for the management of the heritage values associated with the site. It may not be necessary to obtain a heritage permit for certain works specified in the management plan. General Conditions: 4. Nothing in this determination prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions. General Conditions: 5. Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authorities where applicable. Minor Works : Note: Any Minor Works that in the opinion of the Executive Director will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the place may be exempt from the permit requirements of the Heritage Act. A person proposing to undertake minor works may submit a proposal to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely affect the heritage values of the site, the applicant may be exempted from the requirement to obtain a heritage permit. If an applicant is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that the permits co-ordinator be contacted. Interiors Works other than to the Mural Hall and Lamson cash tubes system are permit exempt, provided that they are guided by the Myer Emporium Conservation Management Plan prepared by Lovell Chen Pty Ltd, 2005. Where such works require removal or modification of the remaining decorative plasterwork ceilings and the early staircases they must be photographically recorded to the satisfaction of the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria prior to undertaking the works and copies of the photographs provided to Heritage Victoria.

4.2. MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME

The site at 287 Lonsdale Street is included in an individual overlay in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme identified as *Myer Melbourne (Former Myer Emporium)* (HO542, Figure 14).

The following is extracted from the Statement of Significant for the under the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

The Myer Emporium, spanning Bourke and Lonsdale Streets in Melbourne, is a significant historical and architectural landmark. Established by Sidney Myer between 1911 and 1934, it includes ten buildings designed by prominent architects H.W. and F.B. Tompkins. The complex features notable facades in Classical, Beaux Arts, and Interwar Art Deco styles, with the Bourke Street facade completed in 1933. The Mural Hall, a Streamline Moderne dining hall adorned with murals by Napier Waller, is a key aesthetic highlight.

The Emporium's historical significance is underscored by its pioneering retail techniques and the rare Lamson cash tube system. Socially, it remains a Melbourne institution, renowned for its Christmas window displays and its association with the philanthropic Myer family.

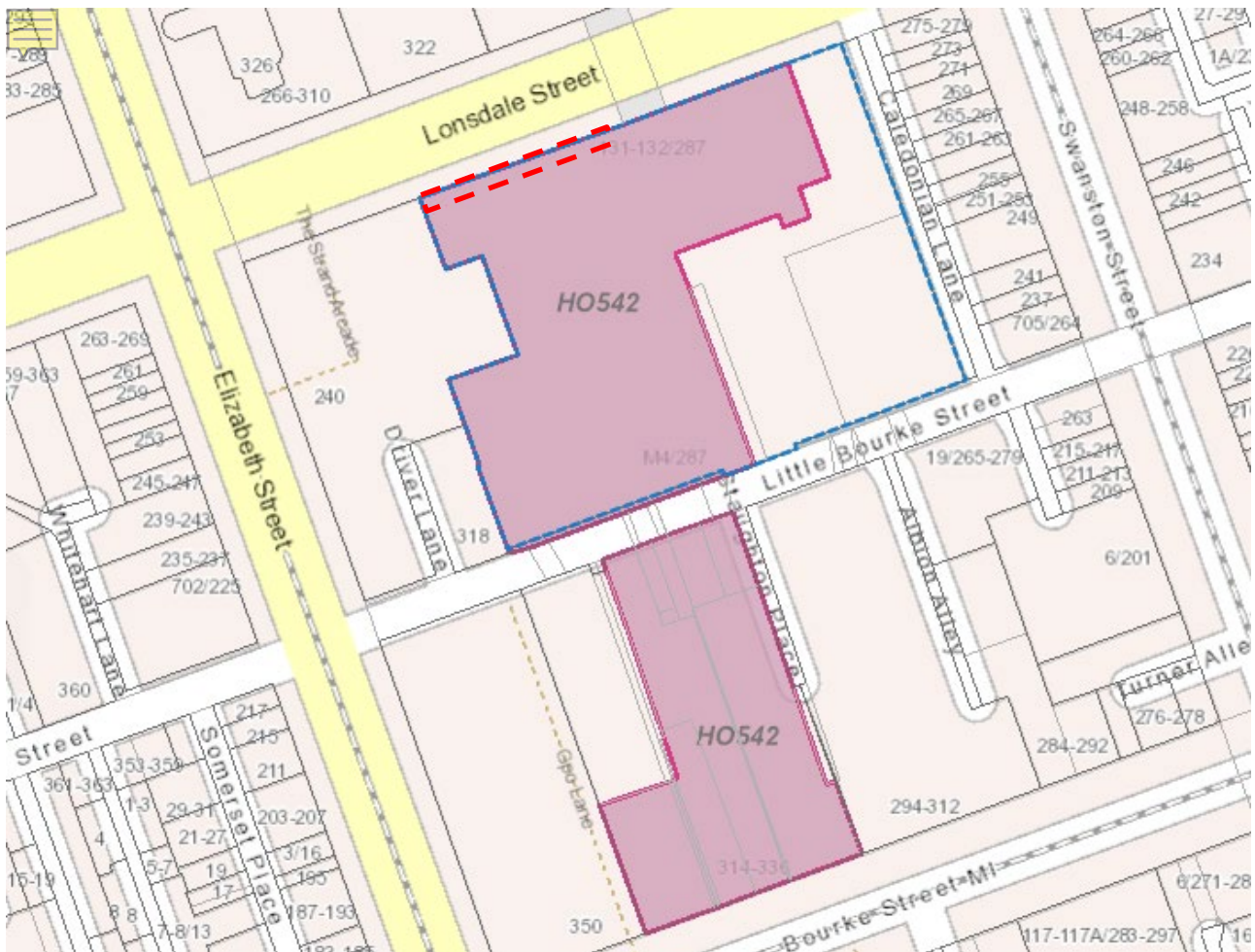


Figure 14 – Heritage Overlay (HO542) subject site dashed red.

Source: Vicplan mapshare, .

4.3. VICTORIAN HERITAGE INVENTORY

The site at 287 Lonsdale Street is included in on the Heritage Inventory as (HI) H7822-1483. This listing is not considered to be relevant for this application because sub-surface works are not proposed.

4.4. NON-STATUTORY CONTROLS

4.4.1. National Trust of Australia (Vic)

The site at 287 Lonsdale Street is classified by the National Trust of Australia (Vic) (File number: B4829).

The National Trust is an advisory body with no statutory powers although it is expected to play an advisory role and provide input into all proposals for the site. There are therefore no statutory requirements as a consequence of this classification.

4.5. REGISTER OF THE NATIONAL ESTATE

The subject site is not included on the Australian Heritage Commission's Register of the National Estate.

5. SIGNIFICANCE

5.1. VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER

The Statement of Significance for the former Myer Emporium (H2100) – as provided in the Victorian Heritage Register– reads as follows:

What is significant?

The Myer Emporium is a department store which occupies an extensive area between Bourke and Lonsdale Streets in Melbourne. The Bourke Street store is located at 314-336 Bourke Street and extends through to 297-309 Little Bourke Street and the Lonsdale Street store is located at 275-321 Lonsdale Street and extends through to 280-84 and 290-316 Little Bourke Street. The area includes ten buildings acquired or constructed by Melbourne businessman and philanthropist Sidney Myer between 1911 and 1934. The first building constructed by Myer was the 1914 Bourke Street building. The new parts of the complex were constructed in stages to the designs of leading Melbourne commercial architects HW and FB Tompkins. The laneways bordering the Myer Emporium include Staughton Place, Lynch Place and Arcade Alley and Angelo Lane.

The former Robertson & Moffat Buildings, South (1881-84), the western section designed by Crouch & Wilson and the eastern section by William Salway (297-311 Little Bourke Street) and North (1890) designed by William Salway, 290-292 Little Bourke Street) , the Former Slatter's Building (1892) designed by Nahum Barnet (283 Lonsdale Street) and the Former Clarke's building (1892-93) designed by Nahum Barnet (275-281 Lonsdale Street) were purchased by Myer at different times. Their interiors have been altered extensively but the buildings remain significant in demonstrating the history of retailing in Melbourne, and forming part of the larger significance of the history of the Myer Emporium.

The Little Bourke Street Pharmacy, a three story brick building, constructed in c.1910 was purchased by Myer in 1981 and the site of the Little Shop, at 280-84 Little Bourke Street was purchased by Myer in 1951.

The facades of the Lonsdale and Little Bourke Street buildings exhibit Classical and Beaux Arts influences while the Bourke Street facade is a notable example of the Interwar Art Deco style finished in 'Snowcrete' (British White Portland Cement), a new product in the 1930s: this has since been painted. The present Bourke Street facade, eight storeys in height, spanning 200 feet (78.74 metres), was completed in 1933 and brought together a section built in 1914 (east) and a section built in 1933 to give the appearance of one building. It takes up the space of what were previously three separate buildings. The Drum Clock, suspended 72 feet (28.34 metres) above the pavement on the Bourke Street facade, is also a significant exterior feature. The sixth floor Mural Hall was also completed at this time.

A major change to the ground floor Bourke Street facade was made in 1955, and included new window treatments at ground floor level with black granite surrounds, the addition of cantilever awnings at first floor level on Bourke and Lonsdale Streets. The original lighting and signage were removed at this time. Other changes included the addition of the pedestrian bridge between the Bourke and Lonsdale Street stores over Little Bourke Street in 1962. This linked the Bourke and Lonsdale Street stores at first, second and third floor levels. Illuminated 'Myer' signs (fabricated from aluminium framing and internally illuminated acrylic panels) and clocks are fixed to the western and eastern sides of the pedestrian bridge at first floor level. The upper storey windows of the Bourke and Lonsdale Street facade have been overpainted and many changes have been made to the interiors since the 1930s.

The Mural Hall, a dining hall for 1000 people and a venue for fashion parades and performances, was completed in 1933 as part of the sixth floor which was set aside for dining. It is a large rectangular space with a decorative plaster ceiling and balconies and wall panels in a Streamline Moderne style. At the north end of the hall, a pair of "mannequin stairs" lead down from two balconies and the change rooms to a common landing. A temporary catwalk or stage was installed at this landing level for fashion parades and performances. The balustrading of the stairs is formed from 'Staybrite' stainless steel in an abstract ribbon design

and the handrail is polished timber. The Hall is decorated with ten murals by renowned artist Napier Waller (1893-1972). The original timber flooring was replaced by parquet in 1960. The hall is lit by three large and elaborate chandeliers from the original decorative scheme which were designed to provide up to ten different lighting effects.

The Lamson pneumatic tube cash conveying system was installed in the store in 1914 with the dispatch station in the basement and cash terminal stations on other floors fed by concealed tubing in the walls. Lamson systems had been invented in the 1880s, and included overhead wire systems for smaller stores and the more sophisticated pneumatic tube system of cash stations and tubes installed inside the walls of large department stores. The system at Myer consists of a series of embossed ornate chambers and chutes, with chrome-plated cast brass, leather valves, push rods and balancing gear. The system is largely intact, though steel tubing which originally connected to the store's various departments, has been cut off at ceiling level in parts. A secondary cash station is still extant in a storage area at the northern end of the fifth floor of the Bourke Street store. This ornate pneumatic tube system is extremely rare and is the only known example of its type to survive in situ in Victoria.

Simcha (Sidney) Baevski was born in 1878 in Kritchev, Russia, and migrated to Australia in 1898 to join his elder brother Elcon who was working in the drapery business in Melbourne. In 1901, after adopting the family name of Myer, Sidney and Elcon moved to Bendigo, and established a drapery store in Hargreaves Street. The first Myer store was established in Melbourne in 1911 in the Bourke Street premises of the drapery business, Wright & Neil. Myer expanded the business rapidly, influenced by overseas trends in retailing and a visit to the United States in 1910, and by 1914 was able to construct a new store known as the Myer Emporium to a design by H.W. and F.B. Tompkins. The eight-storey Myer Emporium opened on 5 August 1914 and its frame still exists within the fabric of the present Bourke Street store. The design for a new eleven-storey Lonsdale Street store was by H.W. and F.B. Tompkins and construction began in 1925.

Part of the success of the Myer retailing technique was due to the innovative use of sophisticated window displays. Sidney Myer relied on the Myer Bourke Street windows to attract customers, using theatrical sets and model figures to display goods, instead of a conglomeration of miscellaneous goods. New lines were first introduced in the windows. From 1925, a separate department within the store was devoted to display design and installation. New windows were installed to Bourke Street in 1955 and the tradition of the decorated Myer Christmas windows commenced at the time of the Olympic Games in 1956 with windows representing 'Santa Claus and the Olympics'. Each year a different theme is illustrated in the windows with later Christmas windows featuring illustrations of fairy tales. The complex continues to operate as a department store with Myer family involvement.

How is it significant?

The Myer Emporium is of aesthetic, architectural, historical and social significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Myer Mural Hall is aesthetically significant as a rare and intact surviving example of a Streamline Moderne department store dining room. The Myer Mural Hall contains large-scale interior mural works, including representations of women through the ages, by Napier Waller, a leading neo-classical mural painter of the Inter-War period.

The Myer Emporium is architecturally significant for its design by prominent Melbourne commercial architects H.W. and F.B. Tompkins.

The Myer Emporium is historically significant in the history of retailing in Victoria as a large scale department store, dominant in Melbourne in the first half of the twentieth century.

The Myer Emporium is historically important for its association with innovative businessman and philanthropist Sidney Myer, who introduced a new style of retailing to Melbourne. His generosity to the city of Melbourne and to Victoria included sizable donations to the Shrine of

Remembrance, the Children's Hospital, the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, the University of Melbourne and the Yarra Boulevard. The Myer family followed his philanthropic example, with the Sidney Myer Music Bowl (1958) and establishing the philanthropic Myer Foundation.

The Lamson cash tube system within the Myer Emporium is historically significant as a rare surviving system of cash transport within a large department store, demonstrating the way the store managed customer payment prior to the introduction of cash registers and electronic transactions.

The Myer Emporium is of social significance as a Melbourne institution, a social, retailing and geographical landmark in the city. The entire complex is connected with these social associations, in particular the wide Bourke Street facade, evoked in the colloquial phrase "more front than Myer's" and the Bourke Street Myer Christmas window displays visited by generations of children as part of the annual Christmas holiday ritual.

5.2. NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (VIC)

The Statement of Significance for the former Myer Emporium (B4829) – as provided in the National Trust Database– reads as follows:

The Myer Emporium holds a unique place in Melbourne's social and retail business history. The department store occupies a double site between Bourke and Lonsdale and Little Bourke Streets (Post Office Place) that was gradually amalgamated by the energetic Sidney Myer from 1911. The complex of buildings, mainly constructed in stages during the 1920s and 1930s to designs by the leading commercial architects of the time, H W & F B Tompkins, are of State significance. Together, the buildings formed a merchandising enterprise that in 1929 was described as one of the largest in the British Empire.

The Bourke Street building, is individually notable for a variety of reasons. The steel frame from the original Bourke Street store (constructed in 1914) still survives within the fabric of the current building and is important as one of the earliest examples of this form of construction. The facade, constructed in bright-white snow-crete was built during the final expansion of Myer in 1932-33 and is a striking example of vertical commercial Gothic. The external clock is notable as an urban landmark and for its immense scale. Importantly, this phase of construction helped to mark Victoria's centenary as well as symbolising Myers' faith in the recovery from the Depression. The Myer Mural Hall, sixth floor, Bourke Street, was also completed at this time with the possible involvement of the architect Harold Desbrowe Annear. It is decorated with Napier Waller mural panels, features three giant chandeliers and is one of the finest Art Deco interiors in the State.

The Myer Lonsdale Street Store (1925-26 and 1928-29) and the Post Office Place Building (1921-22 and 1923) are important as they demonstrate the rapid expansion and remodelling of the Myer Emporium as well as exhibiting the input of H W & F B Tompkins into the design of Myer buildings. The facade of the Lonsdale Street Store is of regional significance as a prime example of beaux-arts influenced commercial facade, and is possibly the largest inter-war structure in the city, providing landmark qualities that survive today. The first Myer factory (constructed in 1912) is still contained within the complex between Lonsdale and Little Bourke Streets, though no longer recognisable as an independent structure.

The aerial crossover to Little Bourke Street (constructed in 1962) is also individually notable. It was designed by Tompkins, Shaw and Evans and was the first public "aerial walkway" in the city. A finely detailed curtain wall adds to its significance as one of the landmark modern structures in the state.

The often-re-arranged interiors of all the buildings retain much of the ornate Adamesque and Art-Deco plasterwork, visible behind the current air-conditioning and lighting ducts. Myer's is also important for its association with the philanthropic Sidney Myer and his family. The Myer legacy includes part of Alexandra Avenue, the Sydney Myer Music Bowl, and the Myer Foundation. Coles-Myer is now the largest retail conglomerate in the country.

Classified: 03/10/1994

NAPIER WALLER MURALS :The panels for the Myer Mural Hall are significant at the National level. They were specially commissioned by the founder of the Myer Emporium, Sidney Myer, to enhance the Mural Hall, designed as an elegant restaurant in line with the leading London and American stores of the day. It is a consciously decorative scheme, the last surviving period room of its kind, and one of the most impressive, with few parallels anywhere in the world. Napier Waller presents an homage to the Arts, the Seasons, and to Women and their achievements. It is a daring project and the completed interior has been described as "the finest example of the Art Deco period in Australia".(Draffin)

Classified: 14/09/1994

The Murals were classified 'Regional'.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1. INTRODUCTION

The following section assesses whether the proposed scheme for the Former Myer Emporium is appropriate in character and detail, and whether it is acceptable in terms of its impact on the heritage significance of the place.

In doing so, it seeks to address a number of key questions:

- What options were considered in developing the proposal?
- What impacts, positive and/or negative, will the proposed works have on the significance of the place?
- What measures are proposed to minimise and mitigate potential negative impacts?
- If a negative impact is proposed, why was the proposed option chosen and why were other more sympathetic options not feasible?
- What measures are proposed to minimise and mitigate negative impacts?

6.2. PROPOSED SCHEME

The proposed works include:

- Two (2) electronic window display panels to the inside of the shopfront glazing on the ground floor. The signs would be 2500mm x 2500mm, setback a nominal 370mm from the shopfront glazing.
 - They would display lifestyle images and animations and moving colour images. The electronic signs will have a minimum dwell time of 60 seconds between advertisements; with an instantaneous transition between each advertisement.
- Three (3) digital cubes fixed to ground level façade under the existing glazed canopy. The signs would be 750mm x 750mm x 750mm.
 - They are to feature static red backgrounds with white text. They would contain a 'single Swipe' text animation to transition between different arrangements of the UNIQLO text logo, with a dwell time of 10 seconds between each change.
- Eight (8) digital signs behind existing windows to Level 2. The signage zone is approx. 2550mm x 3000mm (size of existing windows). The signs may be internally illuminated or electronic sign of a static image with a minimum dwell time of 1 week.
 - The digital signs may be internally illuminated or electronic sign of a static image with a minimum dwell time of 1 week unless otherwise agreed.

Further operation restrictions will be placed on all the new signs, which must be:

- Dimmed between 11pm and 6am to the satisfaction of the responsible authority.
- Controllable and dimmable to the satisfaction of the responsible authority.
- Not dazzle or distract road users due to its colouring.
- Lighting of the electronic sign must be positioned so no direct light or glare shall be visible from any Roadway or from any adjoining property, to the satisfaction of the responsible authority.

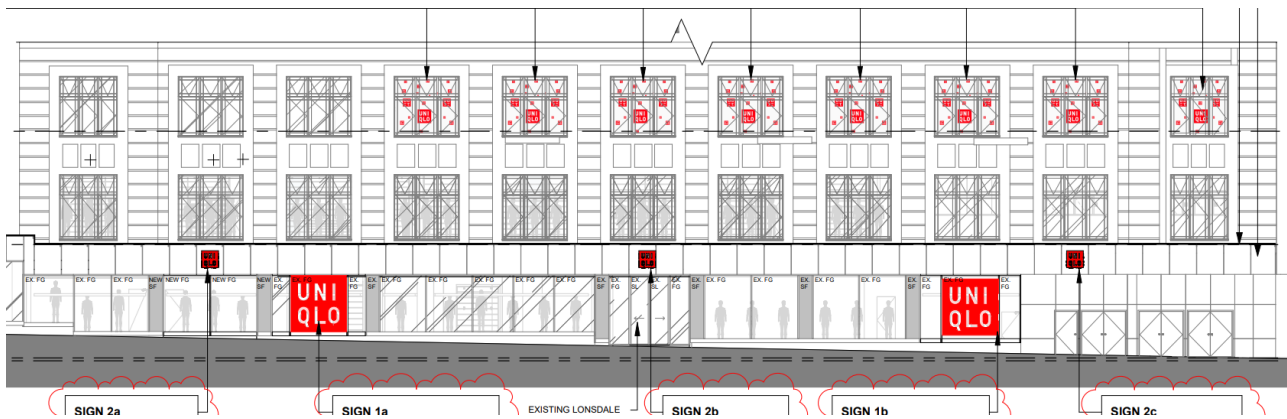


Figure 15 – Proposed Lonsdale Street façade.

Source: TRG, Uniqlo Emporium, Proposed Signage Location & Key Plan, TP003, 26/06/2025.

6.3. HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The current suite of branded signs is proposed as part of the expansion of the Uniqlo store to incorporate an adjacency tenancy to the east currently occupied by the Glue Brand.

6.3.1. Cube Signs and Ground Floor Internal Sign

The two digital LED panels proposed to the inside of the shopfront would be a low impact change to the altered ground floor shopfront of the significant building. Although digital, the sign would only display a red and white UNIQLO logo which, in the context of the wider commercial environment in which shop front displays proliferate to ground floor, would have a limited impact on the wider significant building. It is the type of sign expected in a contemporary commercial shopfront. It would have less or equivalent impact to the illuminated sign that was recently permitted via a permit exemption in this location via P40766.

Similarly, the three digital cubes proposed to the underside of the non original awning would have limited impact on the significant building and wider site. Although the cube would shift at a rate of once everyone 10 seconds, the impact of the movement on the visual setting of the place would be minor. The movement of the image, although not typical of a historic building, would be in keeping with the dynamic commercial retail environment the store is located in where movement (other signs, cars, traffic lights, pedestrians) is commonplace and expected. Within this context, the 10 second transition of the cube sign would not appear out of place.

6.3.2. Digital Signs to Upper Levels

The eight signs proposed to the level 2 windows would be more visible than the cubes and logo signs, being above the non-original awning which now separates the contemporary ground floor shop front from the upper levels of the façade.

It is acknowledged that the upper level windows of retail stores were generally kept free of window displays, which were historically constrained to the ground floor shopfront that were installed for this purpose. Displays in windows to the upper levels were avoided because they were less visible by patrons and the interior space would have required unimpeded access to windows to permit light entering the floorspace.

Now that consistent electronic lighting has surpassed the reliance on natural lighting from the windows, the separation between the traditional historic use of the windows across the façade of the subject building is being reevaluated. The windows to level 2 (and level 1) have been repurposed as window displays like those to the ground floor, with elements previously constrained to the ground floor installed in these windows. For example, see the existing mannequins, UNIQLO logo decals, backlit static signs and recessed coloured lighting (see section 2. Description).

In effect, these recent changes have adapted the Level 1 and 2 windows into display windows, blurring the distinction between the ground level shopfront windows where display windows were located and the more utilitarian windows to the upper levels of the façade.

In addition, the Myer store was known for using retailing techniques involving innovative use of sophisticated window displays. This includes most prominently the annual Christmas windows, but new lines of clothing have been historically displayed first in the shopfront windows as well. This is identified in the statement of significance for the place.

This suggests that the adaption of the windows to level 2 are likely to have been received by passers by as part of the continuing evolving tradition of the iconic retail site that ties the current Uniqlo tenancy to the historic Myer phase of occupation. What's more, the surrounding commercial area is awash with bright, coloured and branded signage (see section 2. Description) which provides a context in which the adaptation of the levels 1 and 2 windows appears acceptable.

The visual impact of the recent adaptation of the upper level windows on the heritage place has been justifiable given the immediate contemporary retail and commercial environment, coupled with the impact of the historic tradition of innovative visual merchandising at the site.

In any case, the upper levels of former Myer Building have been subject to types of branded advertising in the past, including the various types of blade signs to the façade and the historic painted signs to the side elevations which have been updated to fixed digital screens more recently.

Although somewhat inconsistent with the historic use of the windows at the site and tradition of shopfront displays, the current suite of branded signs appears consistent with the contemporary retail context of the building (see section 2. Description) and the unique tradition of window displays at the site.

The effect of the new eight digital signs proposed as part of the current application would have a similar visual impact to expanding the existing decals to fill the additional windows. Although the new signs would be digital, they would not be significantly brighter than the existing decals due to the operational restrictions placed on them as part of the application. The digital nature of the signs will simply allow Uniqlo to replace signage images more conveniently than physically replacing existing physical decals. The digital technology would provide access to a variety of image options.

The displays themselves would be similar to the current decals insofar as they would only show static images that would be changed every week at minimum. The brightness and saturation of the digital display could be determined through conditions of permit to balance the characteristics of the images on the screens with impact on the heritage place (as outlined in the notes in the architectural package).

Because the displays would sit behind the windows frames, they would have no impact on significant fabric. Considering the relatively low impact of the current decals within the adapted level 2 windows, the additional visual impact of the increased window space given over to the proposed signs would be acceptable.

6.4. REASONABLE AND ECONOMIC USE ASSESSMENT

When taking into account the circumstances of the permit application and the registered place or object, 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.

The refusal of the current application to install the proposed signs, especially the eight digital signs behind the Level 2 windows, would impact the reasonable use of the site as a contemporary retail tenancy. It would adversely affect the reasonable use of the place as it would hinder the extent to which the tenancy's advertising signage could be upgraded to meet contemporary retail branding expectations.

The current decals, although successful in promoting the brand to the extent Uniqlo is seeking to expand their operations in the building, are outdated and out of step with the standard of digital signs found at contemporary retail stores. A refusal to grant the permit would hinder the applicant from being able to use the contemporary branded signage technologies that are expected from a contemporary retail store.

Considering the low impact of the proposed digital signs, which would be commensurate with the existing decals to the six windows, a refusal to allow the upgrading of the branded signage at the store would have little effect in conserving the heritage significance of the place.

The 'economic use' consideration is concerned with the economic functioning of the registered place or object and is not focussed on the financial circumstances of the applicant or owner. The feasibility of a proposed development may be relevant insofar as it relates to the viability of an ongoing use or an adaptive re-use of the registered place or object. As the economic functioning of the registered place is not an issue in this case, the economic use argument is not a relevant consideration under the Heritage Act 2017.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposed development has been assessed to have a justifiable impact on the heritage values of the former Myer Emporium Lonsdale building. Key aspects of the proposal assessment are listed below:

- The proposed cube signs and internal shopfront screens are low impact changes to the altered ground floor shopfront of the significant building that would have limited impact on the significance of the place.
- The proposed digital signs to the Level 2 windows would have an acceptable impact on the significance of the place within the context of the commercial environment of the building as the Emporium shopping complex and recent adaptation of the windows to act as display windows.
- The restrictions on operation of the display windows as provided in the drawing set are sufficient to limit the potential impact of their unrestricted operation and can be supported from a heritage perspective.
- A refusal to grant the permit would impact the reasonable use of the place as a contemporary commercial store in the centre city by the use of the type of contemporary branded signage typical of its location/type.

Overall, the proposed scheme is a considered response which is sensitive to the early fabric of the registered place and would not have an adverse impact on its significance and are recommended for approval from a heritage perspective.

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1.3. WEBSITES

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National Trust of Australia (Vic): <https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/vic>

Victorian Heritage Database: <https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/>

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APPENDIX A VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER CITATION FOR THE FORMER MYER EMPORIUM

