

OBJECTION TO LEP HERITAGE LISTING

229-231 Macquarie Street Sydney

26 July 2019

The Owners, William Bland Centre



Objection to LEP Heritage Listing - 229-231 Macquarie Street, Sydney

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents an Objection to the recent Planning Proposal prepared by Sydney City Council for the proposed heritage listing of the 1950s building at 229-231 Macquarie Street, Sydney, known as the William Bland Centre (WBC) on Schedule 5 of Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2102 (LEP).

The Planning Proposal for the proposed heritage listing is supported by two relevant documents prepared by TKD Architects on behalf of Sydney City Council:

- *Modern Movement Architecture in Central Sydney Heritage Study Review*, January 2018 (TKD Study)
- *NSW State Heritage Inventory Data Sheet for 229-231 Macquarie Street, Sydney*, last updated 10 May 2018 (Heritage Inventory).

As background to the Planning Proposal, Sydney City Council commissioned TKD Architects to prepare a study entitled *Modern Movement Architecture in Central Sydney Heritage Study Review*. The study identified and assessed a wide variety of buildings erected in Central Sydney in the years 1945 to 1975.

The TKD Study identified 13 buildings which they considered warranted consideration for listing in Schedule 5 of Sydney LEP 2012. The William Bland Centre was included in this list.

The TKD Study identified the 1957 Act No. 12, as the major impetus for the post-war Modern Movement architectural surge in Central Sydney. The Act removed the long-standing maximum height of buildings restriction of 150 feet. The William Bland Centre was approved in 1956, under the previous prevailing controls, just a year before the Act came into force. This timing also enabled the building to avoid the emerging requirement for the provision of basement level parking.

The Study also placed the William Bland Centre (1958) into its historical context among the buildings identified by TKD. This showed that other major buildings had already established the Modern Movement in the Sydney CBD. These included Berger House, Elizabeth St (1951), Qantas House, Chifley Square (1953), Unilever House, Circular Quay (1955), Commonwealth Bank, Market St (1956), Phoenix House, Pitt Street (1956) Gibb and Beeman, George St (1957), AMP Building, Circular Quay (1958), ICI House, Macquarie St (1958). In addition, three other curtain wall buildings were built in the Macquarie St precinct opposite Sydney Hospital. Like William Bland Centre, these were developed to provide small-suite medical and dental professional rooms, in contrast to the large-scale open office floors that distinguished the majority of the Modern Movement buildings identified by TKD.

The draft heritage Inventory data sheet that supports the nomination of the William Bland Centre for heritage listing, also mentions that it was erected using the lift slab construction method. Additional research undertaken by GBA Heritage has revealed that this process was developed and patented in the United States and introduced in Australia under licence in 1957. By 1960 there were some 23 projects underway or completed using the lift slab technique. The physical evidence of the lift form technique is now “buried” within the structural system of the building and total inaccessible for future research. The intellectual property of the system is readily available in documentary form, including the original structural engineering drawings prepared for the William Bland Centre.

The TKD Study identified key characteristics for buildings that could be considered as part of a celebratory expansion of the representation of Modern Movement buildings in Schedule 5 of Sydney LEP 2012.

- Geometric forms
- Framed systems that enabled open planning and encouraged transparency
- Flexible planning aided by framed building construction
- Celebrate the potential of new building materials such as reinforced concrete, glass and steel
- To be seen as free-standing objects
- Asymmetrical rather than symmetrical in plan and mass
- Internal functions were clearly expressed on the outside
- Ornament was largely abandoned

- Careful use of colour on wall surfaces
- Sun shading devices
- Murals were sometimes integrated into coherent decorative schemes
- Lightweight construction techniques using modular building components
- Modern building materials

Apart from its glazed façade the William Bland Centre at 229-231 Macquarie St does not sufficiently exhibit the Modern Movement characteristics identified in the TKD study to warrant being included in the nominated list for LEP heritage listing.

A renewed Heritage Assessment analysis of the William Bland Centre at 229-231 Macquarie Street, Sydney is contained in Section 4 of this report. It uses the same approach as that taken in the TKD Study and the supporting Heritage Inventory data sheet, but also takes into account the additional information revealed during further research and site inspection.

The analysis concluded that the William Bland does not adequately demonstrate most of the defining TKD Modern Movement characteristics.

It does not pass any of the Thresholds for Entry for listing on Schedule 5 of Sydney LEP 2012.

This Objection finds that there is insufficient justification to LEP heritage list the relatively undistinguished William Bland Centre given that it demonstrates little relevance to the current Planning Proposal for recognising exemplars of the Modern Movement.

Accordingly, this Objection recommends that the William Bland Centre be deleted from the Planning Proposal.

AMENDED DOCUMENTS ISSUED BY COUNCIL IN JULY 2019

After the draft version of this Objection had been submitted to the Owners' Corporation for review, Council provided later versions of the two primary documents:

- *Modern Movement* TKD Study - Issue B, January 2018 was replaced by Issue D February 2019
- *Heritage Inventory* - Issued 10 May 2018 was replaced by new issue 25 March 2019.

The substitution of the key reference documents with amendments dated after the publication of the Planning Proposal (August 2018) can be regarded as a gross failure of process and procedural fairness on the part of Council.

The essential difference is that the Heritage Inventory now states that the William Bland Centre qualifies for LEP listing on six of the seven Heritage Council criteria at a Local level. The Heritage Council methodology (see TKD pp 133) states that an item will be considered of State of Local significance if it meets at least one of the criteria. This is an attempt by the City Council to reinforce the validity of the analyses undertaken by TKD for each of the nominated properties.

In terms of this Objection, the author continues to maintain that the William Bland Centre does not meet any of the criteria thresholds and therefore should not be listed.

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1.0

INTRODUCTION

1.1 REPORT OVERVIEW

This report examines the recent Planning Proposal prepared by Sydney City Council for the heritage listing of nine places on Schedule 5 of Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2102 (LEP).

In particular the report presents an Objection to the proposed LEP heritage listing of the 1950s building at 229-231 Macquarie Street, Sydney, known as the William Bland Centre (WBC).

The Planning Proposal for the proposed heritage listing is supported by two relevant documents prepared by TKD Architects on behalf of Sydney City Council:

- *Modern Movement Architecture in Central Sydney Heritage Study Review*, January 2018 (TKD Study)
- *NSW State Heritage Inventory Data Sheet for 229-231 Macquarie Street, Sydney*, last updated 10 May 2018 (Heritage Inventory).

The Statement of Significance contained in the Heritage Inventory for the William Bland Centre is as follows:

The William Bland Centre at 229-231 Macquarie Street is a representative example of Modernist-influenced office and professional buildings constructed in the City of Sydney in the first decade and a half after the end of World War II. Designed in the office of Hans Peter Oser, a respected Austrian born and trained Modernist architect who migrated to Australia before World War II, the William Bland Centre is a significant example of the Post War International style that clearly demonstrates key elements of the style and is distinguished by unusual patterning across its curtain wall facade. The William Bland centre is a rare example of a building that was constructed using the lift slab method in Central Sydney and is understood to be the old surviving office building in Central Sydney constructed within this system.

The site has some historical significance because of its intermittent and then continuous associations with the medical profession and provides evidence

of the importance of the locality to the profession because of its proximity to Sydney Hospital.

1.2 REPORT OBJECTIVES

The key Objective of this report is to present a well argued case for the deletion of the nomination for LEP heritage listing from the current City of Sydney Planning Proposal.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

The primary methodology adopted by this report comprises:

Undertake a detailed review of the documents prepared on behalf of Council, primarily the TKD Study and Heritage Inventory to identify relevant information and assessment material in relation to the William Bland Centre.

To draw from the TKD Study the specific design criteria for buildings nominated as representative of the Modern Movement in post war Central Sydney.

Undertake additional research into the relevant aspects of the WBC that can facilitate a more rigorous or comprehensive heritage assessment than is currently the case with the Heritage Inventory, particularly in relation to the TKD specific Modern Movement criteria.

Draw conclusions from the additional research to determine the validity of the nomination for WBC to Schedule 5 of Sydney LEP 2012.

1.4 DOCUMENTATION REVIEWED

1.4.1 PLANNING PROPOSAL NOMINATION

- *Planning Proposal – Central Sydney Modern Movement heritage items*, August 2018.
- *Modern Movement Architecture in Central Sydney Heritage Study Review*, Issue B, January 2018.
- *NSW State Heritage Inventory Data Sheet for 229-231 Macquarie Street, Sydney*, last updated 10 May 2018 (Heritage Inventory).

1.4.2 AMENDED DOCUMENTS

After the draft version of this Objection had been submitted to the Owners' Corporation for review, Council provided later versions of the two primary documents:

Modern Movement TKD Study - Issue B, January 2018 was replaced by Issue D February 2019

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The substitution of the key reference documents with amendments dated after the publication of the Planning Proposal (August 2018) can be regarded as a gross failure of process and procedural fairness on the part of Council.

The essential difference, is that the Heritage Inventory now states that the William Bland Centre qualifies for LEP listing on six of the seven Heritage Council criteria at a Local level. The Heritage Council methodology (see TKD pp 133) states that an item will be considered of State of Local significance if it meets at least one of the criteria. This is an attempt by the City Council to reinforce the validity of the analyses undertaken by TKD for each of the nominated properties.

1.4.3 ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

- Development Application files for 229-231 Macquarie Street, dated 1956-1960, held in Sydney City Council archives, including architectural, structural and services engineering drawings and correspondence.
- Original Architectural drawings of the building from the office of HP Oser and Associates, Architects.
- Original Structural Engineering Drawings, particularly of the Lift Slab Construction, from the office of PO Miller Milston and Ferris, Structural Engineers.
- City of Sydney Building Applications for 229-231 Macquarie Street, 1945-1992
- City of Sydney City Building Surveyor's Inspection records of the construction of the new building at 229-231 Macquarie Street, Sydney.
- Australian Lift Slab - An Evaluation of Four Years' Activities, *Constructional Review*, December 1960, pp 26-29.

- Australia's first Lift Slab Building, Behr-Manning Office Block, Lidcombe, *Constructional Review*, May 1957, pp 25.
- City Council Fire Order 2 August 2016.
- Responses to Fire Order and relevant Upgrade documentation

1.5 AUTHORSHIP

This Objection has been prepared by Graham Brooks, Director, GBA Heritage Pty Ltd

1.6 REPORT LIMITATIONS

While this report is limited to the investigation of European cultural heritage values, GBA Heritage recognises that for over forty thousand years or more Aboriginal people occupied the land that was later to be claimed as a European settlement.

The discussion of the heritage significance of the subject property is limited to an investigation historical, associative, aesthetic, research, rarity and representative cultural heritage values, with a specific overlay of values directly and importantly ascribed by the TKD report for examples of the Modern Movement in Central Sydney.

Analysis and recommendations have been made on the basis of documentary evidence viewed and inspection of the existing building. Evaluation of the building fabric was made without physical intervention and was limited to inspection of that which was readily visible in the areas where access was available.

1.7 COPYRIGHT

Copyright of this report remains with the author, GBA Heritage Pty Ltd.

1.8 DECLARATION

Graham Brooks confirms that he has read Part 31 of Division 2 of the Uniform Civil Procedure Rules 2005 and Schedule 7 of the Uniform Civil Procedure Rules 2005. He understands his obligations to the Court and agrees to abide by the rules in Part 31 and Schedule 7, Expert Witness Code of Conduct.

2.0

REVIEW OF PROPOSED HERITAGE LISTING

2.1 TKD STUDY

As background to the Planning Proposal, Sydney City Council commissioned TKD Architects to prepare a study entitled *Modern Movement Architecture in central Sydney Heritage Study Review*. The study identified and assessed a wide variety of buildings erected in Central Sydney in the years 1945 to 1975.

The TKD Study identified a number of buildings which they considered warranted consideration for listing in Schedule 5 of Sydney LEP 2012.

In chronological order these were:

- 1951** Berger House 82-88 Elizabeth St
- 1954** Former Howitz House 398-402 Sussex St
- 1956** Supreme Court Hospital Road Complex
- 1958** William Bland Centre 229-231 Macquarie St
- 1959** Former Liverpool & London & Globe Insurance Co. Building 62 Pitt St
- 1960** Former Sydney County Council Building 570 George St
- 1960** St Peter Julian's Church 673-645 George St, Haymarket
- 1968** Christie Centre 3 Spring St
- 1971** Town Hall House 56 Kent St
- 1972** MLC Centre 10-35 Martin Place
- 1973** Masonic Centre 270-283 Castlereagh St
- Domain Carparking Station (no date)
- Standard Chartered House 1-7 Castlereagh St (no date)

In Section 2, *Defining the Modern Movement*, the authors identify the defining characteristics of buildings which can now be categorised as exemplars of the Modern Movement in Post-War Architecture.

The Modern Movement is one of the most significant and far-reaching twentieth century design aesthetics...

Characteristics of this pioneering phase of Modern Movement architecture included geometric forms that were intended to look as though they could have been machine-made and a preference for "skeletal" forms, that is, framed systems rather than monolithic masonry that enabled open planning and encouraged transparency. There was a tendency to celebrate the potential of new building materials such as reinforced concrete, glass and steel. Buildings were intended to be seen as free-standing objects, tended to be asymmetrical rather than symmetrical in plan and mass and internal functions were clearly expressed on the outside. Ornament was largely abandoned and the appearance of wall surfaces, careful use of colour and sun shading devices were thought sufficient to provide visual interest, although murals were sometimes integrated into coherent decorative schemes. Modern Movement architects rejected traditional historical styles and asserted that architecture must be contemporary in character.

Certain aspects of Modern Movement architecture such as lightweight construction techniques using modular building components, modern building materials and flexible planning aided by framed building construction were interpreted as the essence of Modern Movement architecture and labelled the "International Style" after a 1932 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. However, the functional and social concerns of European Modern Movement architects were largely ignored. (pp 5)

In 1957 Act No 12 replaced the 1912 maximum height of buildings in the central city of 150 feet. Increased building height and scale was facilitated by this Act and provided great opportunities for the growth of buildings categorised in the TKD Study as expressing the Post War Modern Movement. The William Bland Centre was approved in 1956, under the previous prevailing controls, which restricted its height to 150 feet. (pp.16)

With regard to the post war emergence of a new generation of office buildings, the TKD Study provides the following relevant information:

Office work in administration, banking, insurance, and the professions reflects the dominant and growing functions of the city centre...In central Sydney this was reflected in a massive boom in office building construction, principally focussed between Circular Quay and Martin Place... About 90% of new buildings in the central business district between 1957 and 1967 have been offices or banks.

Whilst many buildings were constrained by small, land-locked sites and could only express being modern to passers-by through the surface of the façade, the more pure examples were free standing or otherwise on corner sites. (pp 26)

The first major building project undertaken by private enterprise was the 15 storey Berger House at 82-88 Elizabeth Street, originally designed by Arthur F Blackwell, first approved in 1951. The project faltered for several months in 1953 before being revived with Stephenson and Turner it was completed around the beginning of 1955.

The original external design, which provided shading for windows in the façade, was modified and a lightweight curtain wall aesthetic appeared in Sydney for the first time. (pp 27)

In some ways Modern Movement architecture after World War II is encapsulated by tall office buildings sheathed in a taunt skin of aluminium and glass...

Aesthetically, in their purest expression, such buildings were viewed as objects to be seen in the round and characterised by their divorce from the fabric of the city, ideally rising from podiums of three or four levels or standing in open plazas. (28)

Glass technology certainly helped to make the lightweight curtain wall systems more palatable... A system of double glazing known as "Thermopane" was developed in America during World War II. Here the air between the two layers of glass was dehydrated and sealed, resulting in thermal and acoustic benefits. Local manufacture under licence began in the 1950s. The curtain wall on Berger House was made in Australia by Dowell Aluminium Windows Pty Ltd. It was prefabricated in square 2.7 metre units in Melbourne and shipped to Sydney. Each unit contained three windows with anti-actinic glass (James Sandy's "Thermoseal"), with an aluminium spandrel backed by a fire-resistant gypsum. The spandrels reflected recent innovations in regulations, which now permitted lightweight fire protection systems.

The Commonwealth Bank building (in Market Street) relied on its spandrels to provide fire protection. (pp 30)

During the second half of the 1950s and the first half of the 1960s construction was focussed in the northern part of Sydney. Curtain wall clad towers continued to be built in some quantity until the mid 1960s and lingered into the second half of the 1970s. (pp30)

COMMENT

In contrast to the prefabricated curtain wall systems in some post-war buildings, the architectural drawings prepared by HP Oser and Associates for the William Bland Centre (Fig. 9) show the more conventional approach of a single skin brick spandrel wall on the edge of the floor slab to create the fire protection from the floor below, with the glazed façade panels simply fixed to the outer face of the brick wall.

2.2 HISTORICAL COMPARISONS

The TKD Study provides a useful contextual study of post war buildings in the Sydney CBD which were designed and constructed with predominant glazed curtain wall facades:

1951 Berger House 82-88 Elizabeth St
1953 Qantas House Chifley Square (LEP/SHR)
1955 Unilever House Circular Quay
1956 Commonwealth Bank Market St (LEP)
1956 Phoenix House Bridge and Pitt Streets
1957 Gibb and Beeman 383 George St
1958 AMP Building Circular Quay (LEP)
1958 ICI House 61 Macquarie St
1958 William Bland Centre 229 Macquarie St
1959 Agriculture House 195 Macquarie St
1959 Park House 187 Macquarie St
1959 Burns Philp Trustee 51 Pitt St
1960 Mena House 225 Macquarie St

Some of these have been demolished or are not listed in LEP 2012.

In Sydney terms, one of the most influential post-war Modern Movement buildings fitted with a glazed curtain wall façade was the MLC building in North Sydney, constructed in 1956-57. The steel framed building utilised a fire-rated spandrel panel that was integral to the prefabricated curtain wall system.

2.3 LIFT SLAB CONSTRUCTION

The TKD report does not mention the use of lift-slab construction as a characteristic feature of post-war Modern Movement buildings in central Sydney.

In the Heritage Inventory form, the use of lift-slab construction was highlighted as an important component of the heritage significance of the building. It was discussed at length in the Historical section of the Heritage Inventory Form.

Additional research by GBA Heritage has identified two contemporary articles in the *Constructional Review*, dating from 1957 and 1960. Both articles have the flavour of marketing the new system to the industry, as is relatively common with such trade publications. Relevant extracts are set out below.

Australia's First Lift Slab Building, Behr-Manning Office Block, "Constructional Review", May 1957.

The Lift Slab method of construction was introduced in Australia with the success late last month and early this month when the roof and two upper floors were raised on the new administrative block for Behr-Manning (Australia) Pty Ltd, at Lidcombe, Sydney....

Lift Slab of Australia Pty Ltd, of Homebush, Sydney, who hold the sole licence for Australasia, report that more than 30 Lift Slab projects are already planned in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Christchurch the total floor area under design being more than 3 million square feet. The world patent rights are held by the International Lift Slab corporation of Dallas, Texas. (pp 22)

That article describes at length the technical aspects and advantages of the new process. It noted that one of the key issues was the nature of the coating placed on the upper surface of the slab after they had been poured in order to facilitate the separation of the next slab as the lifting (or jacking) process commenced. A number of photos from the site illustrate various aspects of the process.

The façade of the Behr-Manning Office Block was described as a glass and aluminium curtain wall. The consulting engineer to Lift Slab of Australia was identified as Mr Peter Miller., with the architects being Lemont, Niblett and Daubney.

Interestingly, the consulting structural engineers for the William Bland Centre were PO Miller Milston and Ferris.

Australian Lift Slab, An Evaluation of Four Years' Activity, "Construction Review", December 1960

After four years of considerable activity, the lift slab method has been firmly established as an asset to the Australian Building Industry. Twenty-three structures have been lifted in four states and in New Caledonia, ranging from one to 18 storeys in height, including the tallest lift slab structure in the world (Royal Assurance, Sydney) and the world's largest area of heavy eight concrete to be lifted in one section (Ashleys Buckingham, West Ryde). The most important development has been the design and construction in Australia of completely automatic short stroke lifting equipment, which has since been adopted by American lift slab licensees.

The main thrust of the article was to praise the speed with which the structure of a building could be completed, and the associated savings in cost.

Lift slab projects in Australia, identified in the December 1960 article included the following.

Behr-Manning offices, Lidcombe
Royal Exchange Assurance, Sydney
Chevron-Hilton Hotel, Potts Point
"Glenhurst" Yarranabbe Road Darling Point
Hotel Australia, Adelaide
William Bland Centre, Sydney

Others identified in the Heritage Inventory are:
Gibb & Beeman 383 George Street (1957) designed by HP Oser. The Royal Assurance building at 22 O'Connell Street, was also known as Kindersley House (1957), since demolished.

A comprehensive set of Structural Engineering drawings for the William Bland Centre are held in Sydney City Archives.

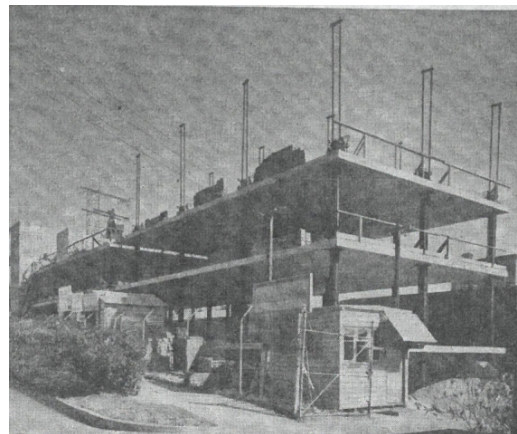


Fig. 1 Behr-Manning under construction 1957
Constructional Review, May 1957

2.4 PLANNING PROPOSAL

The Planning Proposal notes, under the section entitled “Assessment of significance for listing” that Council has relied upon the standard NSW Heritage Council Heritage Assessment Criteria. However, the Proposal continues:

The City investigation considered further criteria to identify the buildings and art works which warrant consideration for listing in this planning proposal. These criteria are used to establish the buildings and art which have a local heritage significance that can still be reasonably appreciated. The identified nine buildings and artworks meet these criteria in terms of having sufficient integrity, comparative value within the local area, and a significance that is maintained in approved or advanced plans.

This statement reinforces the particular achievement in the TKD Study that identifies a series of specific criteria which distinguish Modern Movement buildings within the City of Sydney.

In chronological order, the short-listed recommendation was for the following buildings to be entered on Schedule 5 of Sydney LEP 2012:

- 1954** Former Howitz House 398-402 Sussex St
- 1958** William Bland Centre 229-231 Macquarie St
- 1959** Former Liverpool & London & Globe Insurance Co. Building 62 Pitt St
- 1960** Former Sydney County Council Building 570 George St
- 1960** St Peter Julian's Church 673-645 George St, Haymarket
- 1971** Town Hall House 56 Kent St
- 1972** MLC Centre 10-35 Martin Place
- 1973** Masonic Centre 270-283 Castlereagh St

Contrary to the TKD identified characteristics for Modern Movement buildings, the 1951 *Berger House* at 82-88 Elizabeth Street, designed by Stephenson, and Turner described in the TKD Study as “the first lightweight metal and glass curtain wall in Sydney”, was excluded from the short list when the Planning Proposal was being formulated.

3.0

WILLIAM BLAND CENTRE

3.1 HISTORICAL SUMMARY

The following historical summary of the existing building has been drawn from the relevant sections of the Heritage Inventory and corrected or updated by information contained in the City Council records and early drawings.

The site at 229-231 Macquarie Street, Sydney, was purchased by Queens Club in September 1937, the transfer taking place in August 1938.

In 1952 a Development Application was lodged for the erection of a new building for use as a private hotel with shops on the ground floor. The proposed building comprised a building approximately 150 feet high (the prevailing height limit) containing garages in the basement, shops and professional rooms on the ground floor, hotel rooms on the upper floors and a restaurant with terrace on the upper floor. The application was submitted by H Hugo Stossel, Architect. Development consent was granted on 6th February 1952 but that project did not proceed.

On 6 April 1956, a Development Application was lodged for the erection of "an 11 storey (including lower ground floor) building at an approximate cost of £500,000, to be used as medical surgeries, with one chemist shop and one optometrist shop on the ground floor". The proposal suggested that the new building would provide accommodation for 146 doctors' surgeries plus one flat for use by a caretaker. There was also a large area at the rear of the ground floor for an additional tenancy.

The application (251/56) was lodged by Medical and Dental Buildings Pty Ltd. The architect was H P Oser. The application was approved on 30 April 1956. It was approved under the County of Cumberland Planning Scheme Ordinance. The approval noted that the plans must be approved by the City Building Surveyor before construction could commence.

Council records commented that the existing buildings on the site comprised two, three storey buildings, with caretaker's flat, which had been used as professional rooms since at least 1920.

Unfortunately, the files for this project held in the City Council Archives do not contain any correspondence or commentary by the architects discussing their design intent or the reason they chose to use a glazed curtain wall as the street façade for an otherwise conventional interwar building comprising professional suites.

Of interest is the fact that the postal address for Medical and Dental Buildings Pty Ltd was in the same building as the office of HP Oser, Architects – Scot Chambers, Hosking Place, Sydney. This suggests that the company may have been established deliberately to undertake the subject development. By the time the project commenced construction in 1958, the former Medical and Dental Buildings Pty Ltd had become a public company, Medical-Dental Building Limited with its registered address at 217 Macquarie Street. The completed building at 229-231 remained as a Company Title entity for the individually owned suites within the building until it was strata titled in the mid 1970s.

During these two years, the architects and engineers proceeded with design development.

By May 1958 work on the project had progressed to the stage where the Architects were in correspondence with the City Council regarding some aspects of the project, for which they were about to submit the required Building Application.

Two particular features were in contention – avoidance of an emerging requirement for carparking in the basement of city buildings and rejection of a possible proposal for three residential flats at the top of the building.

In a letter dated 26 May 1958 from HP Oser to the Town Clerk, expressing concern recent discussions with the Building Surveyor's Department had raised a requirement for the provision of carparking in the basement. The architects pointed out that the 1956 development approval for the project did not require any on-site carparking.

Should the provision of carparking facilities be imposed upon us at this late stage we feel sure that our Clients would have to reconsider the entire scheme and most probably would abandon it because neither the economic nor the structural conditions of this particular building would make this provision practical. In fact all of our discussions with the Clients have been based upon the outcome of our development application in which no mention of car parking facilities was made by any party, and therefore the entire economic structure of the building would become impossible.

In a memo to the Town Clerk, dated 10 July 1958, the City Building Surveyor discussed the May letter from the architects. He stated that the 1956 development approval remained valid but the project had not yet commenced.

The proposed building would contain approximately 146 doctors' surgeries, and as these surgeries would be occupied by doctors whose transport to the building would generally be by their own vehicle, it is considered that additional traffic congestion in the area will result unless some effort is made to provide off-street parking facilities. Utilisation of the basement of the proposed building for this purpose would provide accommodation for approximately 25 cars.

From discussion with the Architect's representatives, it would appear that design of the proposed building has proceeded in anticipation of using the lift-slab method of construction and the positioning of columns within the building have been arranged to facilitate this construction, but will make the provision of ramped access from Macquarie Street to the basement difficult.

The provision of off-street parking facilities may prevent the use of the lift-slab type of construction for the basement. Nevertheless, the provision of off-street parking facilities in the basement is considered desirable, but the proclamation which will empower Council under Part XI of the Local Government Act to require the provision of parking accommodation in buildings has not yet been gazetted.

In view of the circumstances of the case, the City Building Inspector recommended that the Council accept the situation and advise the architects that parking facilities will not be required.

It appears that the lack of any legal requirement for on-site carparking, resulting from the delay in gazetting amendments to Part XI of the Local Government Act, enabled the project to avoid a significant emerging provision in the planning controls for new buildings within the city centre.

On 17 July 1958, the City Building Surveyor wrote again to the Town Clerk regarding a new proposal from the developer for three, three bedroom flats to be included within the proposed building. His memo quoted advice from the Under Secretary, Department of Local Government, dated 24 June 1958:

The Department understands that it is proposed to erect a fourteen storey building at 229-231 Macquarie Street, Sydney which is to contain 140 professional suites and a penthouse incorporating

three apartments, each containing three bedrooms. If these details are correct the opportunity is taken to point out that the building will be a "residential flat building" under the Local Government Act 1919, but will not comply with the requirements of Schedule 7 of the Act.

Under the existing law the incorporation of two or more flats in any building cannot be approved unless the building complies in all respects with the standards prescribed for residential flat buildings.

The present law dealing with the regulation of flats and residential flat buildings came into force in 1940, was further extended in 1945 and was applied to the inner portion of the City of Sydney in 1948.

If the Council is of the opinion that certain parts of the area call for special consideration as far as the erection of residential flat buildings is concerned, the appropriate course of action appears to be to make special provision accordingly in its planning scheme.

A building application in connection with the proposed development has not been submitted, and no mention has been made to this Department by the applicant of any proposal to include flats in the building, as referred to in the letter from the Under Secretary. It is appreciated that the provisions of Schedule 7 to the Local Government Act relating to residential buildings would apply.

Despite the fact that no building application had been lodged by 17 July 1958 and that the architects had not discussed any intention to include multiple flats into the building with the Building Surveyor's Department, Council files contain architectural drawings by HP Oser's office showing proposals for at least two versions of the plant room and caretaker's flat at the top of the building, one of which was marked "omitted". This could have been the source of what may have simply been a rumour regarding additional flats in the building.

On 7 August 1958, the architects lodged a building application comprising plans and specifications for the proposed building with the Building Inspectors' Department, requesting approval at their earliest convenience.

On 19 August 1958, a letter from Medical-Dental Building Ltd to the City Treasurer confirmed that demolition of the existing buildings at 229-231 Macquarie Street was completed at the end of May 1958.

Negotiations surrounding the building application continued for several months. On 25 September

1958 the architects wrote to the owners of the adjacent building at 233 Macquarie Street, suggesting that one of their boundary walls, which had been exposed by the demolition work and was unstable, should be demolished and rebuilt, at the cost of the Medical-Dental Building project.

On 13th October wrote to the City Building Surveyors' Department confirming that they had adjusted the design of the tower on the top of the building containing the lift motor room, plant room and caretaker's flat had been amended by setting it back away from the inner edges of the northern and southern light wells.

The setback was now sufficient to secure the angle of light penetration to continue unobstructed above the roof level of the building and forming a tangent to the highest point of the tower without changing its direction.

We feel that the elimination of the obstruction to this angle of light penetration in the respective dimension of the light area follows the spirit of the regulation controlling the width of light area and we are certain that we have now fulfilled the purpose of the regulation.

We hope that you will now see your way clear to accede to our request and to issue the building permit for this job and hand the stamped plans to our officer.

The building application was approved on 17 October 1958.

Detailed Structural Engineering drawings, prepared by PO Miller Milston and Ferris, Structural Engineers, were prepared progressively between late 1958 and late 1959. Mechanical services, lifts and air-conditioning consultants were WE Bassett & Associates.

Excavation commenced in August 1958. The floor slabs were lifted progressively between May and June 1959 and the facade framing commenced in November 1959.

The building was completed towards the end of 1961 and immediately occupied by the shareholding occupants of the various medical and dental suites. The Building Contractor was James Wallace Pty Ltd.

A series of applications for internal partitioning was submitted while the building was under construction, enabling the owners and occupants of the various suites to move in on completion.

Other applications concerned various fit-outs in the basement, the first being for the New Zealand Club, and alterations around the ground floor entry, shops and services areas. Consent was given by Council for the fitout of the large space at the rear of the ground floor for a bank.

Over subsequent decades, there was a continuing series of further applications as different suites either changed hands or were upgraded.

The building was converted from Company Title to Strata Title in 1975 (SP 10041), with the various suites being owned within the strata title arrangement, as had been the case with the company title arrangement when the building was first erected.

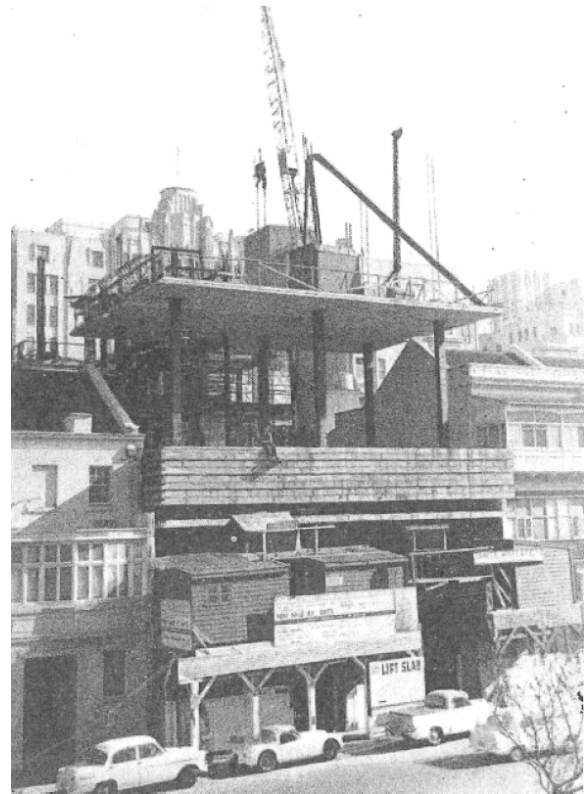


Fig. 2 William Bland under construction, 1960
Construction Review, December 1960



Fig. 3 The building in construction.
Beenbah Chambers is in the background
Heritage Inventory datasheet



Fig. 4 The existing context of the building

3.2 DESCRIPTION OF BUILDING

In planning terms, the William Bland Centre on the western side of Macquarie Street in the block between Queens Square and Martin Place is arranged in a manner that reflects a typical inner-city commercial building from between the two world wars.

The typical upper level floor plan has a rectangular profile that reflects the rectangular nature of the site, while having three large light wells to provide light and ventilation into those floors. The light wells are located in the centre of the north and south sides and in the centre of the rear creating a “H” shaped profile. The narrow centre section of the building contains two lifts, one on each side of the common corridor, two stairs, male and female toilets and a garbage flue. One of the lifts is larger to accommodate a stretcher, reflecting the building occupants, being primarily Doctors and Dental Suites.

The structure of the building comprises structural steel columns, encased in concrete and flat plate concrete floors that were lifted into position using the relatively new technology known as Lift Slab construction. The use of flat plate slabs required that the main columns were set well in from the front and rear elevations and both sides, requiring close coordination with the required layout of the multiple medical or dental suites located on each of the upper floors. A large number of smaller, secondary columns were located around the stairwells, lift shafts and the three major light wells.

The only exposed façade is that which faces Macquarie Street. This appears to be a relatively simple single-glazed proprietary aluminium framed glazing system stretching to the full height of the façade above the ground floor awning and shop fronts.

The architectural expression of this otherwise two-dimensional façade treatment is established by a repetitive pattern of alternating pairs of window bays and single window bays, and alternating light and dark spandrel panels. Two panels in the paired window bays are operable for natural ventilation, with top hinged sashes and simple window furniture. (see Fig. 13)

The detailed arrangement of the glazing frames appears, from the original architectural drawings, to have allowed for the installation of window-box style air-conditioner units in the panel below the window sill. (see Fig 9)

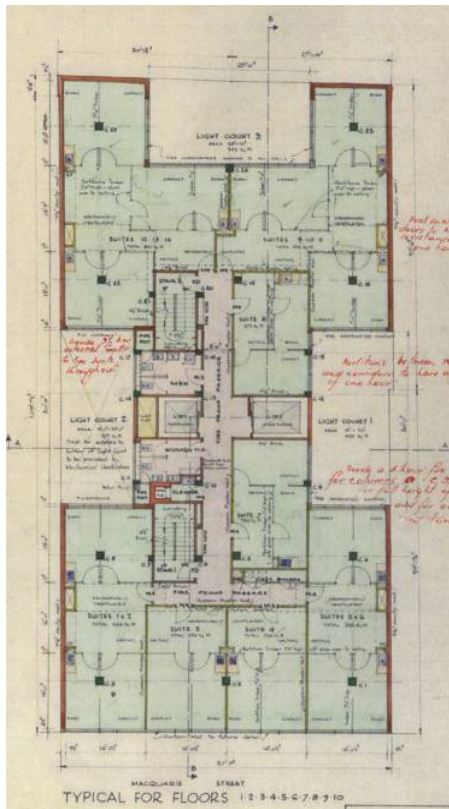


Fig. 5 Typical upper floor plan showing Three light wells and small suites

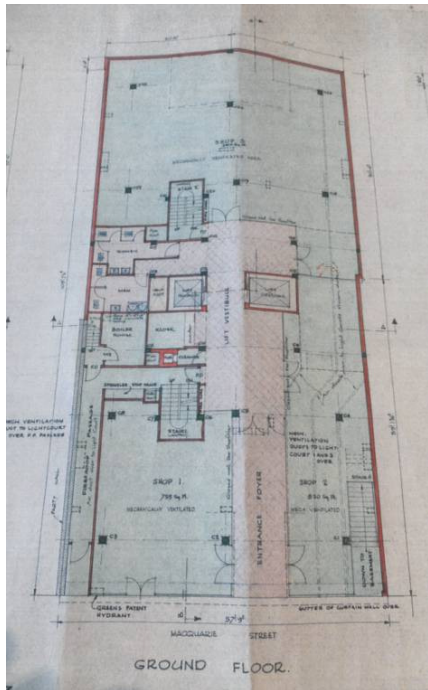


Fig. 6 Ground Floor Plan

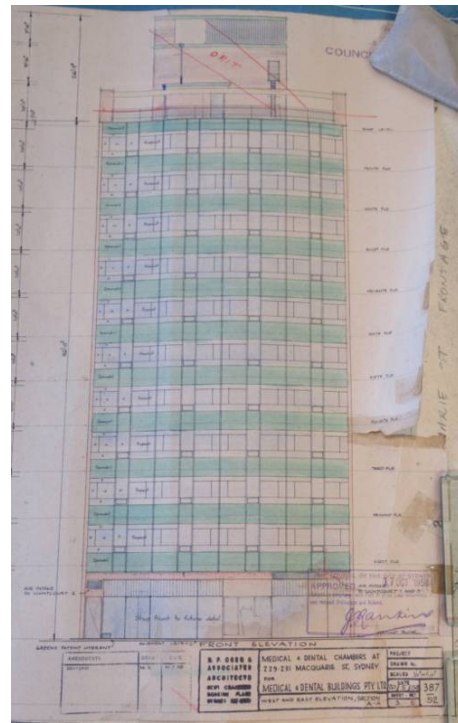


Fig. 7 Macquarie Street elevation Showing the glazed façade layout

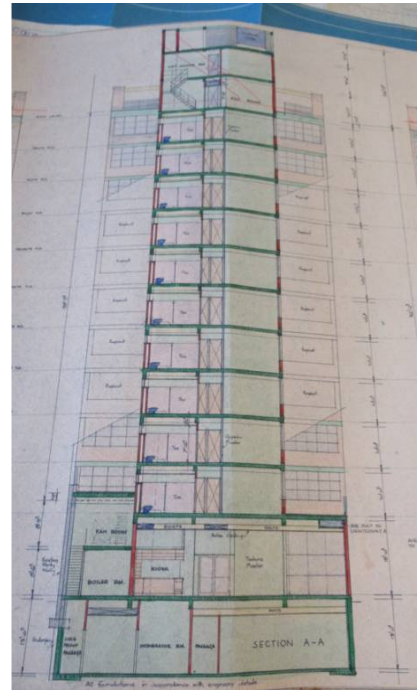


Fig. 8 Architectural Section through centre of building showing light wells

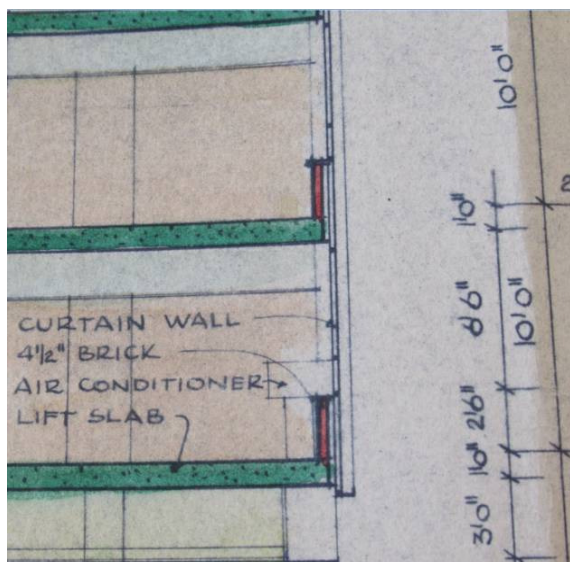


Fig. 9 Detail of façade fire rated brick wall and glazing system

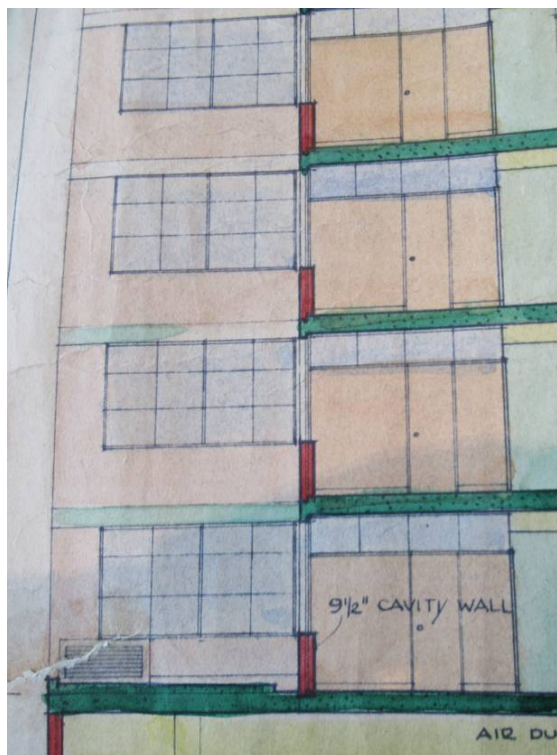


Fig. 10 Detail showing typical construction of Light well walls and steel framed glazing

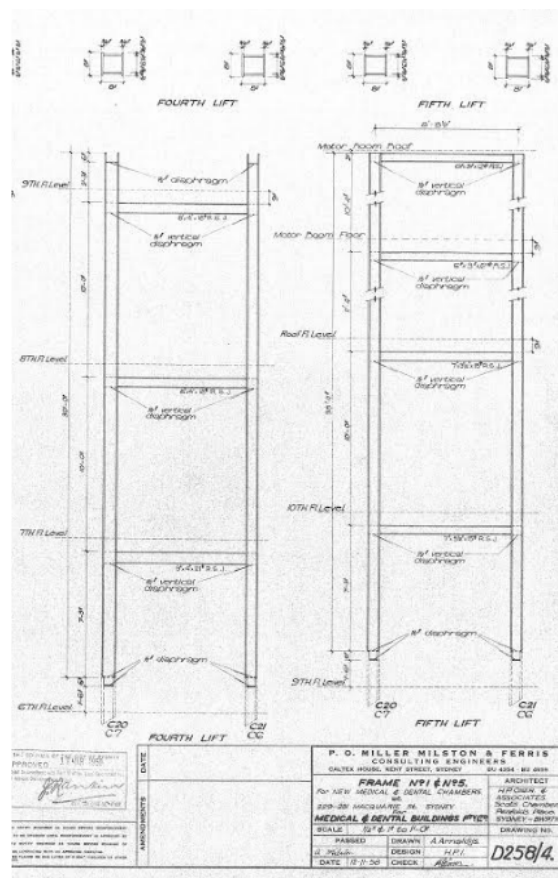


Fig. 11 Lift Slab column detailing

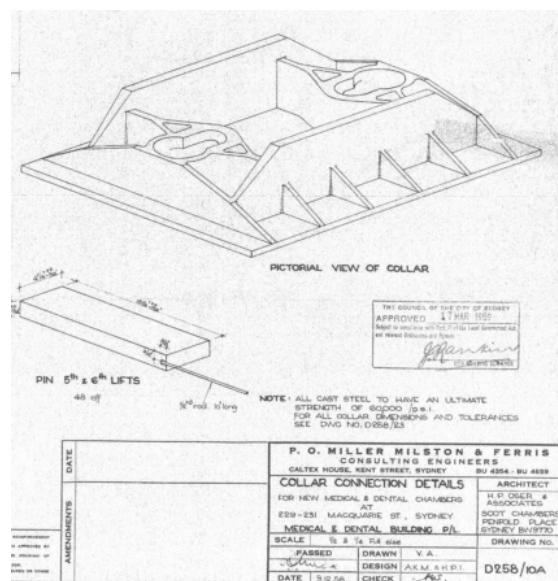


Fig. 12 Lift Slab collar detail

3.3 CONDITION AND INTEGRITY

In general, the William Bland Centre is in reasonable condition.

The tenancy suites and common areas have been progressively been upgraded over the years. The ground floor retail areas and basement tenancies have been altered over the years in accordance with the changing requirements of different tenants.

It would appear from a preliminary site inspection that the suites on some floors are now fitted with suspended ceilings, enabling flush mounted lighting. The survival of original air-conditioning duct layouts documented in the original mechanical engineering drawings has not been verified.



Fig. 13 View of current suite with false ceiling

3.4 FIRE ORDER UPGRADE

On 2 August 2016, the owners of Strata Plan 10041 were served with a Fire Order requiring a variety of aspects of the building to be upgraded or managed in a more diligent manner. On 1 August 2018 a variation was granted to extend the compliance period until January 2020.

A report, dated 8 April 2019 by Building Code Solutions summarised progress to date in responding to the various requirements of the original Fire Order.

The biggest components that remained outstanding were investigations of fire engineering alternative solutions and the installation of fine grained fire stopping measures between floors.

3.5 FAÇADE SPANDREL GLAZING

In March 2019 a short report on the Glass Spandrel Failure was submitted by Surface Design. They noted that *the glass is likely to be original glass installed on the building in 1960*, but that *no*

documentation outlining the glass type was found in the current building documentation.

Their report concluded:

Following review of the available information on the glass and its failure we can summarise our findings as follows:

- 1. There have been two reported failures of the spandrel glass over the last 15 years*
- 2. The glass is a 6mm toughened glass panel with textured surface and seraphic frit.*
- 3. The most probably failure mechanism is an inclusion type failure, though impact cannot be ruled out as a possible cause.*
- 4. The glass should be replaced with a similar glass type which will require sampling to achieve a suitable textured surface, acceptable to the building owners. The glass should be toughened and heat soak tested.*

Given the amount of glass in the project and the extensive time it has been installed (over 50 years) we believe there is a low risk of failure to the remainder of the glass panels.

There remains a residual risk of further failures occurring on the project, as with any installation of monolithic toughened glass. The owners' corporation may wish to monitor the project until the next failure (where the inclusion may be recovered and analysed).

The owners of the building may wish to consider reinstatement of the street awning to the building as a possible risk mitigation item. The street awning can provide protection to pedestrians below in the case of any future failures.



Fig. 14 Macquarie St elevation glazing layout

4.0

REVIEW OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

4.1 RELEVANT CRITERIA

The standard methodology provided by the NSW Heritage Council for the assessment of Heritage Significance and consideration for potential entry on the heritage schedule of the relevant Local Environmental Plan is contained in the publication *Assessing Heritage Significance*.

This methodology sets out Guidelines for Inclusion and Guidelines for Exclusion under each criterion. It is generally considered that a place being considered for listing on the relevant LEP or on the NSW State Heritage Register (SHR) need only qualify for entry against one of the six main criteria, to be of sufficient significance.

The heritage assessment process contained in the Heritage Inventory for this property does not formally consider the threshold issues contained in the Guidelines for Inclusion or Exclusion, as set out in the relevant Heritage Council publication.

In the case of the subject Planning Proposal for the entry of a select number of additional buildings and art works to Schedule 5 of Sydney LEP 2012, the TKD Study, commissioned by Council, identified a number of specific additional criteria or characteristics related to the nature, role and contribution that the particular building made to the post-war Modern Movement in Central Sydney.

The discussion of these additional assessment set out below, focuses entirely on the existing building, known as the William Bland Centre. This approach has been taken as the Planning Proposal which forms the background framework for the heritage listing nomination is entirely focussed on identifying buildings and other items that are directly expressive of the post-war Modern Movement in Central Sydney.

Therefore this renewed assessment first examines the William Bland Centre against the particular characteristics identified by the TKD Study, and takes this assessment into the established heritage assessment criteria

4.2 MODERN MOVEMENT CRITERIA

The TKD Study identified the following key architectural and development criteria that they used to select surviving buildings which expressed the Modern Movement in post-war Central Sydney.

This discussion assesses the William Bland Centre against those criteria.

Geometric forms

The William Bland Centre is tightly sandwiched between two adjoining buildings and only presents its glazed curtain wall façade on the Macquarie Street elevation.

It does not fulfil the Modern Movement criteria for this characteristic.

Framed systems that enabled open planning and encouraged transparency

The building was constructed using the flat plate lift slab process. It was not a framed structural system.

It does not fulfil the Modern Movement criteria for this characteristic.

Flexible planning aided by framed building construction

The building was designed and developed to house a large number of fully sound isolated small medical suites and surgeries, many of which sourced their light and ventilation from the three lightwells that were “carved” from what would have potentially been a rectangular floor plate.

There was never an intention of creating open flexible floor areas. The building was essentially planned and developed on the traditional format of an interwar small-suites commercial or professional building, typical of those erected along Macquarie Street and elsewhere in the city. The individual suites were originally established within a company title ownership structure and subsequently converted to strata title.

It does not fulfil the Modern Movement criteria for this characteristic.

Celebrate the potential of new building materials such as reinforced concrete, glass and steel

The building utilised reinforced concrete, glass and steel but only partially in the format suggested by this characteristic.

To be seen as free-standing objects

The building was not conceived as a free standing building. It was completed in 1961 and would have been followed almost immediately by the adjacent Mena House at 225 Macquarie Street. It presents today as a simple façade to the street. Its other three elevations are characterised by large light wells set against adjoining buildings.

It does not fulfil the Modern Movement criteria for this characteristic.

Asymmetrical rather than symmetrical in plan and mass

The building is symmetrical in all aspects, including floor plate layout and façade arrangement.

It does not fulfil the Modern Movement criteria for this characteristic.

Internal functions were clearly expressed on the outside

All of the operational functions of the building such as staircases, lift shafts and services risers, which were often expressed externally in Modern Movement buildings, are hidden within the interiors of the building.

It does not fulfil the Modern Movement criteria for this characteristic

Ornament was largely abandoned

There was no deliberate use of ornament on the façade or elsewhere on the building.

It fulfils the Modern Movement criteria for this characteristic

Careful use of colour on wall surfaces

The curtain wall façade used a deliberate geometric pattern of two tone colour to enliven the underlying geometry of the curtain wall framing elements.

It fulfils the Modern Movement criteria for this characteristic

Sun shading devices

In a similar fashion to most early curtain wall buildings, there was no external sun shading devices incorporated into the Macquarie St façade.

This characteristic is not applicable.

Murals were sometimes integrated into coherent decorative schemes

There were no murals or decorative sculptural elements used in the building composition or its internal public spaces.

This characteristic is not applicable.

Lightweight construction techniques using modular building components

The façade of the building used a glazed lightweight external skin fixed over a conventional brick spandrel wall aligned to the outer edge of the floor slabs. Walls enclosing the three major lightwells were constructed in conventional brickwork between the floor slabs, with external painted render to improve the daylight transmission down into the lightwell.

The lift-slab structural design combining steel columns and flat-plate concrete floor slabs qualifies as one of the so-called lightweight construction techniques used in the early post-war era.

The building partially fulfils the Modern Movement criteria for this characteristic

Modern building materials

The glazed curtain wall on the Macquarie St façade presented a distinctive modern appearance to what was a very conventional interwar period small suite professional building.

The building partially fulfils the Modern Movement criteria for this characteristic

CONCLUSION

The foregoing analysis concludes that, with the exception of the glazed façade, the William Bland Centre at 229-231 Macquarie St does not sufficiently exhibit the defining Modern Movement characteristics identified in the TKD study to warrant being included in the nominated list for LEP heritage listing.

4.3 HERITAGE COUNCIL CRITERIA

CRITERION (A) – HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

An item is important in the course, or pattern, of the local area's cultural or natural history

Guidelines for Inclusion

- *Shows evidence of a significant human activity*
- *Is associated with a significant activity or historical phase*
- *Maintains or shows the continuity of a historical process or activity*

Guidelines for Exclusion

- *Has incidental or unsubstantiated connections with historically important activities or processes*
- *Provides evidence of activities or processes that are of dubious historical importance*
- *Has been so altered that it can no longer provide evidence of a particular association*

The Heritage Inventory for William Bland Centre identifies the heritage significance of the building under this criterion as follows:

Heritage Inventory Statement

The site has some historical significance because of its intermittent and then continuous associations with the medical profession and provides evidence of the importance of the locality to the profession because of its proximity to Sydney Hospital.

Discussion

The William Bland Centre was granted development approval in 1956, in the closing stages of the pre-war statutory planning regime in the City Centre. It does not reflect the increased capacity released by the 1957 Act which included removal of the 150 feet height limit, introduction of the concept of Floor Space Ratio and processes regulated by the Height of Buildings Advisory Committee. These new planning standards facilitated the development of most of the taller buildings that expressed the post-war Modern Movement in Sydney CBD.

The most relevant historical context of WBC is in fact the re-development of small 19th century buildings along Macquarie St. These were in the vicinity of Sydney Hospital, the traditional location for medical practitioners. This took place primarily between the 1920s and the early 1960s. The new "tall" buildings were deliberately designed to accommodate small scale medical and dental

suites. This process began in earnest in the interwar years with what is now a fine collection of buildings including "Beanbah Chambers" at No. 235, Hengrove Hall at No. 193 and "Wyoming" at No 175 and stretched north to the Royal Australian College of Physicians and "BMA House".

This form of development resumed in the early post-war years with the development of a series of similarly functioning small suite buildings. In line with the new architectural ideas, these buildings now presented glazed curtain wall facades over their essentially interwar architectural form and planning, including side and/or rear light wells. In addition to the William Bland Centre, these buildings included "Mena House", at No. 225 (now Windeyer Chambers), Agricultural House at No. 195 and Park House at No. 187, all of which were contemporary developments.

The historical context of the William Bland Centre is not the large-scale Modern Movement commercial and institutional buildings which were developed after 1960. It is the relatively small, purpose designed small-suite medical and dental buildings erected in this section of Macquarie St in the interwar and then post-war decades.

The focus by the medical profession on a Macquarie St address began to wane in the 1960s as opportunities for medical practitioners to work in association with suburban hospitals and other medical facilities expanded. Large scale institutional and commercial buildings were erected in Macquarie Street such as the Supreme Court, Reserve Bank and former Westpac Headquarters. They quickly became the dominant buildings in this streetscape, overpowering the earlier professional buildings.

Conclusion for this criterion

In terms of the current Planning Proposal for Modern Movement Buildings in Sydney CBD, the William Bland Centre does not pass the Inclusion Threshold for heritage listing on Schedule 5 of Sydney LEP 2012 for this criterion.

CRITERION (B) – HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
An item has strong or special association with the works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in the cultural or natural history of the local area.

Guidelines for Inclusion

- Shows evidence of a significant human occupation
- Is associated with a significant event, person, or group of persons

Guidelines for Exclusion

- Has incidental or unsubstantiated connection with historically important people or events
- Provides evidence of people or events that are of dubious historical importance
- Has been so altered that it can no longer provide evidence of a particular association

Heritage Inventory Statement

Although the site of 229-231 Macquarie Street was owned by prominent and significant 19th century architect, John Bibb, from 1843 to 1863, it has not been confirmed if he occupied the site at any time.

The William Bland Centre was designed in the office of Hans Peter Oser, an Australian architect who migrated to Australia in 1938 and established a successful architectural practice in 1948. He was one of a number of migrant architects who helped to popularise Modernist architecture in NSW and his office was responsible for a number of notable buildings in Sydney.

Discussion

The association with John Bibb does not meet the threshold for listing as his ownership of the site was some 100 years before the mid 20th century erection of the subject building.

The William Bland Centre was erected as one of a group of purpose designed medical and dental professional suites buildings, erected in Macquarie Street in the inter-war and post-war decades, to capitalise on their proximity of Sydney Hospital.

The building was designed by the European émigré architects Hans Peter Oser and Jean George Henri Fombertaux. During the post-war decades their office was responsible for several buildings in Sydney and nearby suburbs. The firm evolved through a variety of principals over the following decades, and well after his death in 1967.

HP Oser and Associates is not regarded as one of the important Modern Movement architects in post war Sydney.

Conclusion for this criterion

In terms of the current Planning Proposal for Modern Movement Buildings in Sydney CBD, the William Bland Centre does not pass the Inclusion Threshold for heritage listing on Schedule 5 of Sydney LEP 2012 for this criterion.

CRITERION (C) – AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE
An item is important in demonstrating aesthetic characteristics and/or a high degree of creative or technical achievement in the local area.

Guidelines for Inclusion

- Shows or is associated with, creative or technical innovation or achievement
- Is the inspiration for a creative or technical innovation or achievement
- Is aesthetically distinctive
- Has landmark qualities
- Exemplifies a particular taste, style or technology

Guidelines for Exclusion

- Is not a major work by an important designer or artist
- The Has lost its design or technical integrity
- Its positive visual or sensory appeal or landmark and scenic qualities have been more than temporarily degraded
- Has only a loose association with a creative or technical achievement

Heritage Inventory Statement

The William Bland Centre is a significant example of the Post War International style that clearly demonstrates key elements of the style as applied to commercial architecture. These include the aluminium framed and glazed curtain wall, planar façade surface, extensive areas of glazing, and colour (and pattern) achieved through spandrel panels. The patterning across the facade is unusual and distinctive.

It is one of four similarly scaled contemporary International style buildings along Macquarie Street (the others are Mena House at 225-227 Macquarie Street, Agriculture House at 195 Macquarie Street, and Park House at 187-189 Macquarie Street), two of which have been modified externally (225-227 and 195 Macquarie Street).

Discussion

The additional research and analysis undertaken for the preparation of this report has clearly determined that the William Bland centre does not demonstrate virtually all of the characteristics identified in the TKD Report as being essential to meet the Modern Movement heritage listing Planning proposal.

It is essentially a traditional, inter-war medical suites building in conception and in the architectural arrangement of the floor planning. It was designed as an infill building with three major light wells. It was developed as a company title building that was subsequently transferred to Strata Title. Finally, it was conceived under the previous planning controls before the 1957 changes unleashed the scale and architectural prominence of the Modern Movement.

The only Modern Movement attribute that can be ascribed to the William Bland Centre is the Macquarie St façade.

The building does not make an important demonstration of the prominent three-dimensional characteristics that were a major feature of its contemporaries, Qantas House (1953) and AMP Circular Quay (1958). Its curtain wall was a very simple example of the emerging fashion for curtain wall facades.

Conclusion for this criterion

In terms of the current Planning Proposal for Modern Movement Buildings in Sydney CBD, the William Bland Centre does not pass the Inclusion Threshold for heritage listing on Schedule 5 of Sydney LEP 2012 for this criterion.

CRITERION (D) – SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

An item has strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group in the area for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.

Guidelines for Inclusion

- *Is important for its associations with an identifiable group*
- *Is important to a community's sense of place*

Guidelines for Exclusion

- *Is only important to the community for amenity reasons*
- *Is retained only in preference to a proposed alternative*

Heritage Inventory Statement

The building's social significance has not been ascertained and requires further assessment.

Discussion

The William Bland Centre has some association with the medical and dental professions in Sydney as one of at least six properties along Macquarie St that were developed for this market in the early to mid- decades of the 20th century. Its connection with that community is primarily through the various professional tenants and owner-occupiers who have taken suites in the building.

Conclusion for this criterion

In terms of the current Planning Proposal for Modern Movement Buildings in Sydney CBD, the William Bland Centre does not pass the Inclusion Threshold for heritage listing on Schedule 5 of Sydney LEP 2012 for this criterion.

Criterion (e) – Research Value

An item has potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the area's cultural or natural history

Guidelines for Inclusion

- *Has the potential to yield information new or further substantial scientific and/or archaeological information*
- *Is an important benchmark or reference site or type*
- *Provides evidence of past human cultures that is unavailable elsewhere*

Guidelines for Exclusion

- *The knowledge gained would be irrelevant to research on science, human history or culture*
- *Has little archaeological or research potential*
- *Only contains information that is readily available from other resources or archaeological sites*

Heritage Inventory Statement

The William Bland Centre is understood to be the oldest surviving office building in Central Sydney constructed using the lift slab method.

Discussion

The William Bland Centre has some interest as one of at least 23 buildings erected in Australia and the Pacific region using the lift-slab method of construction under licence from its US inventors. It

was not an important benchmark in the use of the construction process.

Although other lift-slab buildings have since been demolished, the potential to yield additional information on this system cannot be derived from the extant William Bland Centre fabric. All the specialised structural steel elements required for the construction process are buried in the surrounding concrete structure and all the equipment and technology used during the erection of the building was removed upon completion.

The intellectual property developed for the lift-slab method of construction is well documented, including the various patents issued in the US, and possibly elsewhere. There are a number of contemporary publications which provide contextual information about the relatively short time this system was used in the post-war building industry, before being overtaken by other construction systems.

The structural engineering drawings produced by P O Miller Milston and Ferris for the William Bland Centre are comprehensive and held in city council archives and elsewhere.

Conclusion for this criterion

In terms of the current Planning Proposal for Modern Movement Buildings in Sydney CBD, the William Bland Centre does not pass the Inclusion Threshold for heritage listing on Schedule 5 of Sydney LEP 2012 for this criterion.

CRITERION (F) - RARITY

An item possesses uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of the area's cultural or natural history

Guidelines for Inclusion

- *Provides evidence of a defunct custom, way of life or process*
- *Demonstrates a process, custom or other human activity that is in danger of being lost*
- *Shows unusually accurate evidence of a significant human activity*
- *Is the only example of its type*
- *Demonstrates designs or techniques of exceptional interest*
- *Shows rare evidence of a significant human activity important to a community*

Guidelines for Exclusion

- *Is not rare*
- *Is numerous but under threat*

Heritage Inventory Statement

The William Bland Centre is a rare example of a building that was constructed using the lift slab method in Central Sydney. It is also an uncommon example of a building with a proprietary aluminium framed curtain wall façade that was constructed in the 1950s in Central Sydney.

Discussion

The William Bland Centre was one of a number of buildings erected in Sydney in the late 1950s using the lift slab form of construction. While this is now a “defunct” construction process in terms of the Australian construction industry, the opportunity remains for the process to be re-introduced should market conditions require.

Nevertheless, the intellectual property for the process remains available in various documentary sources and does not require the retention of any of the buildings erected using the process to be retained as the process is not readily discernible from the extant fabric.

In terms of the curtain wall system, there is no evidence that the glazed façade installed on the Macquarie Street elevation of the William Bland centre was unique or proprietary system. Such systems were developed at around the same time as the building was being erected but these were not used here. These proprietary systems often involved sealed double glazing units for environmental performance, fire-rated material for the spandrel panels and/or operable venetian blinds within the sealed double-glazed units.

The façade of William Bland Centre is a simple set of extruded aluminium frames to hold either clear or coloured glass panels, and a series of manually operated openable windows. The glass spandrel panels relied on brick walls erected the outer edge of the floor slabs to achieve the required fire resistance performance between floors. The windows to the three light wells were of conventional steel framing

Conclusion for this criterion

In terms of the current Planning Proposal for Modern Movement Buildings in Sydney CBD, the William Bland Centre does not pass the Inclusion Threshold for heritage listing on Schedule 5 of Sydney LEP 2012 for this criterion.

CRITERION (G) - REPRESENTATIVE

An item is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of the areas cultural or natural places

Guidelines for Inclusion

- *Is a fine example of its type*
- *Has the principal characteristics of an important class or group of items*
- *Has attributes typical of a particular way of life, philosophy, custom, significant process, design, technique or activity*
- *Is a significant variation to a class of items*
- *Is part of a group which collectively illustrates a representative type*
- *Is outstanding because of its condition or size*
- *Is outstanding because of its integrity or the esteem in which it is held*

Guidelines for Exclusion

- *Is a poor example of its type*
- *Does not include or has lost the range of characteristics of a type*
- *Does not represent well the characteristics that make up a significant variation of a type*

Heritage Inventory Statement

The William Bland Centre is representative of the Modernist influenced office and professional buildings constructed in the City of Sydney in the first decade and a half after the end of World War II.

Discussion

The degree of Modernist influence on the William Bland Centre, as defined by the TKD Study is limited to the architectural appearance of the glazed façade to Macquarie Street. There is no other feature by which the building demonstrates or was influenced by the identified Modern Movement characteristics.

It may be representative of the various medical and dental professional suites buildings erected along Macquarie St, but this is a small aspect of the development history of Central Sydney that did not generate any wider influences on the nature or identity of the City.

Conclusion for this criterion

In terms of the current Planning Proposal for Modern Movement Buildings in Sydney CBD, the William Bland Centre does not pass the Inclusion Threshold for heritage listing on Schedule 5 of Sydney LEP 2012 for this criterion.

4.4 VALIDITY OF NOMINATION

The above detailed analysis clearly demonstrates that the William Bland does not adequately demonstrate most of the Modern Movement characteristics and it did not pass any of the Thresholds for Entry for listing on Schedule 5 of Sydney LEP 2012.

Accordingly, the nomination for LEP Heritage Listing in Sydney LEP 2012 is not valid.

5.0

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 CONCLUSIONS

The Planning Proposal for the proposed heritage listing is supported by two relevant documents prepared by TKD Architects on behalf of Sydney City Council:

- *Modern Movement Architecture in Central Sydney Heritage Study Review*, January 2018 (TKD Study)
- *NSW State Heritage Inventory Data Sheet for 229-231 Macquarie Street, Sydney*, last updated 10 May 2018 (Heritage Inventory).

As background to the Planning Proposal, Sydney City Council commissioned TKD Architects to prepare a study entitled *Modern Movement Architecture in Central Sydney Heritage Study Review*. The study identified and assessed a wide variety of buildings erected in Central Sydney in the years 1945 to 1975.

The TKD Study identified the 1957 Act No. 12, as the major impetus for the post-war Modern Movement architectural surge in Central Sydney. The Act removed the long-standing maximum height of buildings restriction of 150 feet. The William Bland Centre was approved in 1956, under the previous prevailing controls, just a year before the Act came into force. This timing also enabled the building to avoid the emerging requirement for the provision of basement level parking.

The Study also placed the William Bland Centre (1958) into its historical context among the buildings identified by TKD. This showed that other major buildings had already established the Modern Movement in the Sydney CBD. These included Berger House, Elizabeth St (1951), Qantas House, Chifley Square (1953), Unilever House, Circular Quay (1955), Commonwealth Bank, Market St (1956), Phoenix House, Pitt Street (1956) Gibb and Beeman, George St (1957), AMP Building, Circular Quay (1958), ICI House, Macquarie St (1958). In addition, three other curtain wall buildings were built in the Macquarie St

precinct opposite Sydney Hospital. Like William Bland Centre, these were developed to provide small-suite medical and dental professional rooms, in contrast to the large-scale open office floors that distinguished the majority of the Modern Movement buildings identified by TKD.

The draft heritage Inventory data sheet that supports the nomination of the William Bland Centre for heritage listing, also mentions that it was erected using the lift slab construction method. Additional research undertaken by GBA Heritage has revealed that this process was developed and patented in the United States and introduced in Australia under licence in 1957. By 1960 there were some 23 projects underway or completed.

The physical evidence of the lift form technique is now “buried” within the structural system of the building and totally inaccessible for future research. The intellectual property of the system is readily available in documentary form, including the structural engineering drawings prepared for the William Bland Centre.

The TKD Study identified key characteristics for buildings that could be considered as part of a celebratory expansion of the representation of Modern Movement buildings in Schedule 5 of Sydney LEP 2012.

- Geometric forms
- Framed systems that enabled open planning and encouraged transparency
- Flexible planning aided by framed building construction
- Celebrate the potential of new building materials such as reinforced concrete, glass and steel
- To be seen as free-standing objects
- Asymmetrical rather than symmetrical in plan and mass
- Internal functions were clearly expressed on the outside
- Ornament was largely abandoned
- Careful use of colour on wall surfaces
- Sun shading devices
- Murals were sometimes integrated into coherent decorative schemes
- Lightweight construction techniques using modular building components
- Modern building materials

With the exception of its glazed façade the William Bland Centre at 229-231 Macquarie St does not sufficiently exhibit the Modern Movement characteristics identified in the TKD study to

warrant being included in the nominated list for LEP heritage listing.

A renewed Heritage Assessment analysis of the William Bland Centre at 229-231 Macquarie Street, Sydney is contained in Section 4 of this report. It uses the same approach as that taken in the TKD Study and the supporting Heritage Inventory data sheet, but also takes account of the additional information revealed during further research and site inspection.

The analysis concluded that the William Bland does not adequately demonstrate most of the TKD defining Modern Movement characteristics.

Equally it does not pass any of the Thresholds for Entry for listing on Schedule 5 of Sydney LEP 2012.

This Objection finds that there is insufficient justification to LEP heritage list the relatively undistinguished William Bland Centre given that it demonstrates little relevance to the current Planning Proposal for recognising exemplars of the Modern Movement.

Accordingly, this Objection recommends that the William Bland Centre be deleted from the Planning Proposal.

5.2 RECOMMENDATION

On the basis of the additional research and renewed Heritage Assessment findings, this Objection recommends that the William Bland Centre be deleted from the Planning Proposal.