EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Sydney Council has prepared the Planning Proposal – Central Sydney Modern Movement heritage items which is currently on public exhibition. It proposes the listing of nine Modern Movement buildings and artworks for listing as local heritage items under Schedule 5, Part 1 of Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012 (Sydney LEP 2012). Among these is the Sydney Masonic Centre at No. 279-283 Castlereagh Street, Sydney, which the accompanying report identifies as an outstanding example of the Brutalist Style.

Designed by the well-regarded firm of Joseland & Gilling, when completed in 1979 this building demonstrated the core characteristics of Brutalist architecture including the use of assertive geometric forms, dominating scale and an expression of the basic structure of off-form concrete as the principal aesthetic device. The building when opened in 1979. Although missing the tower structure originally conceived, it was original, powerful and well executed and confidently commanded its corner site.

Since that time, however, the building has been subject to significant and highly visible alterations and additions which have eroded the original architectural vision and fundamentally changed its external character. The building which now exists has an interface with the street which is human in scale and comprised of lightweight, delicately assembled and refined materials which conceal rather than celebrate the supporting structure and its sculptural qualities. In addition to this, a new tower addition over the original podium, although executed superficially to the original unbuilt design, is finished in painted concrete and lightweight cladding rather than the raw concrete originally conceived. The effect of these changes has been to irreparably alter the architectural character of the building so that it no longer exhibits the key characteristics of the Brutalist Style and is not representative of the Brutalist movement.

The analysis conducted in light of these modifications leads to the conclusion that the building in its present form does not satisfy the criteria for listing as a heritage item and that the site should not be included in Schedule 5 Part 1 of Sydney LEP 2012.

With listing of a building of this age and size comes a series of impositions far greater than with listings of more modest buildings. While some office buildings have been listed and continue to function successfully, buildings such as the former Sydney Masonic Centre create a range of additional impositions that create a disproportionate burden on the owner, including:

- Office buildings of this type now have an established lifecycle. As requirements for office space change, along with requirement for energy efficiency and occupant facilities, economic pressure demands the building be replaced. This is particularly relevant in terms of energy efficiency. Many organisations including
the State Government require a high level of energy efficiency in buildings. This becomes much more difficult to achieve with older office buildings.

- As the building ages further its class of office space will be gradually downgraded with the consequence of lower rental incomes. To arrest this major refurbishment will be required. There is a strong co-relation between the capital cost of refurbishment and the amount of rental lift possible. This will only work if other requirements such as energy efficiency can be met.

- The building, once listed, would have to be conserved, regardless of economic considerations and could be demolished only in the most exceptional circumstances. The building podium was designed specifically as a headquarters for Freemasons. Should their requirements change and they no longer need the building, there will be major issues in terms of reasonable adaptive reuse. This essentially sterilises an important central city site.
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preamble

This Heritage Analysis for the Sydney Masonic Centre at No. 279-283 Castlereagh Street, Sydney, New South Wales, has been prepared in response to the Planning Proposal – Central Sydney Modern Movement heritage items prepared by the City of Sydney Council which proposes to list the building as a heritage item in Schedule 5, Part 1 of Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012 (Sydney LEP 2012).

This assessment has been prepared at the request of the owners of the property.

1.2 Authorship and Acknowledgements


The historical information and assessments of significance contained in this report partly relies on existing studies (refer to Section 1.6 below). Acknowledgment of the authors of these studies is duly given.

1.3 Limitations

A full search of primary records, such as Council records and land title records, was not undertaken. The Modern Movement Architecture in Central Sydney Heritage Study Review, prepared by Tanner Denton Kibble Architects for Council in 2018 (see Section 1.6 below), incorporated information from Council records. The information provided by this report and by the general references listed under Section 1.6 below was relied upon.

No archaeological assessment was carried out.

1.4 Methodology

This assessment has been prepared with reference to the NSW Heritage Office (now Division) publication Assessing Heritage Significance, July 2001.

1.5 Physical Evidence

Site visits were carried out in December 2018 and January 2019. Unless otherwise stated, the photographs contained in this assessment were taken by Anna McLaurin and Philip North.
1.6 Documentary Evidence

The following documents, plans and publications have been used for the preparation of this report:

1.6.1 General References


1.6.2 Historic Photographs

- *Sydney Masonic Centre including significant interiors and Mona Hessing artwork*, 279-283 Castlereagh Street, Sydney.

1.6.3 Reports

1.6.4 Heritage Inventory Listing Sheets (Draft)

- Former Colonial Mutual Life Building Façade, Martin Place, Sydney. State Heritage Inventory Database No.: 2423826.
- Sydney Masonic Centre including significant interiors and Mona Hessing artwork, 279-283 Castlereagh Street, Sydney.

1.6.5 Statutory Planning Documents

- City of Sydney, Planning Proposal – Central Sydney Modern Movement heritage items, Sydney, City of Sydney, 2018.

1.6.6 Building/Development Application Files

- City of Sydney, 823/2E/74.
- City of Sydney, D2001/461.

2 SITE IDENTIFICATION

The site consists of the following three individual lots:

- No. 279-283 Castlereagh Street, Sydney (Lot 1, D.P.1067328)
- No. 66 Goulburn Street, Sydney (Lot 2, D.P.1067328)
- No. 285 Castlereagh Street, Sydney (Lot 3, D.P.1067328)

The site as a whole is identified as No. 279-285 Castlereagh Street and 66 Goulburn Street, Sydney. Refer to Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1: Detail of the site (outlined in red).
SIX Maps
3 HERITAGE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

This section identifies the statutory listings affecting the site and the statutory requirements that arise out of these listings.

3.1 Heritage Management Framework - Statutory Listings

3.1.1 The Site

The site is **not** presently subject to any statutory heritage listings including:

- State Heritage Register
- Sydney LEP 2012

Further, it is **not** located in a heritage conservation area as defined by Schedule 5 Part 2 of the *Sydney LEP 2012*.

3.1.2 The Surrounding Area

There is one heritage item listed on the State Heritage Register, under the auspices of the *NSW Heritage Act 1977*, in the vicinity of the site. This is:

- *The Sydney Downing Centre*, No. 302 Castlereagh Street, Sydney

Figure 3 provides a detail from the Sydney Heritage Plan (*Sydney LEP 2012*), which identifies heritage items, listed by Schedule 5 Part 1 of the *Sydney LEP 2012*, in the vicinity of the site. Heritage items are coloured brown and numbered. The site is outlined in red.
The heritage items in the vicinity of the site are identified as follows:

- **Former warehouse façade 'Museum Towers',** No. 267-277 Castlereagh Street, Sydney. Marked I1706 in Figure 3. State Heritage Inventory Database No. 2424148.

- **Civic Hotel,** No. 386-388 Pitt Street, Sydney. Marked I1945 in Figure 3. State Heritage Inventory Database No. 2424131.

- **Sydney Downing Centre,** No. 302 Castlereagh Street, Sydney, Marked I1854 in Figure 3. State Heritage Inventory Database No. 00393.

There are no Conservation Areas, listed by Schedule 5 Part 2 of the *Sydney LEP 2012*, within the vicinity of the site.

### 3.2 Relevant Heritage Legislation

In NSW, heritage listings give rise to statutory requirements to consider the heritage impact of any proposed works on a heritage item. The following requirements are relevant to any works being proposed to the subject site.

#### 3.2.1 NSW Heritage Act 1977

The *NSW Heritage Act 1977* provides statutory obligations for the conservation of items of heritage significance in NSW. Places, buildings, works, relics, movable objects or precincts considered to be of significance for the whole of NSW are listed on the State Heritage Register (SHR). The SHR is administered by the Heritage Division of the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) and includes a
diverse range of over 1500 items. Any alterations to these assets is governed by heritage guidelines and works cannot be carried out without prior approval from the Heritage Council of NSW.

It is not proposed to list the site as a heritage item under the provisions of the NSW Heritage Act 1977.

3.2.2 Local Environmental Plans

In NSW, the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, 1979 (EP&A Act) sets out statutory obligations for local governments to take into consideration the impacts to the environment and the community of any proposed development or land-use change. Under the EP&A Act, local government must prepare and implement a Local Environmental Plan (LEP) to regulate development within their respective Local Government Area (LGA). Clause 5.10 of an LEP generally prescribes the statutory requirements related to heritage conservation.

Sydney LEP 2012 prescribes the following statutory requirement in relation to heritage conservation:

(5) **Heritage assessment**

The consent authority may, before granting consent to any development:

(a) on land on which a heritage item is located, or
(b) on land that is within a heritage conservation area, or
(c) on land that is within the vicinity of land referred to in paragraph (a) or (b) require a heritage management document to be prepared that assesses the extent to which the carrying out of the proposed development would affect the heritage significance of the heritage item or heritage conservation area concerned.

The Planning Proposal – Central Sydney Modern Movement heritage items prepared by the City of Sydney, proposes to list the subject site as a local heritage item under Sydney LEP 2012. As a consequence, the site would become subject to these provisions.

3.2.3 Development Control Plan

Development Control Plans (DCP) provides detailed planning and design guidelines to support the planning controls in the Local Environmental Plan (LEP). The Sydney Development Control Plan was prepared and adopted in 2012 by City of Sydney Council (Sydney DCP 2012). It identifies Councils requirements for new works on land to which the Sydney LEP 2012 applies. Particular reference is made to the controls and guidelines for alterations and additions and new development within the vicinity of a heritage listed item.
Should the site be listed as a heritage item under *Sydney LEP 2012* as proposed, it would become subject to the heritage conservation controls contained in *Sydney DCP 2012.*

4 **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

4.1 **Original Occupation**

While an Aboriginal history has not been provided for, it is acknowledged that the original occupants of the area were the Gadigal people, the traditional custodians of the land within the City of Sydney boundaries.

4.2 **Development of the Existing Buildings on the Site**

The site has a long association with freemasonry and has accommodated a Masonic hall since 1884, which served as the United Grand Lodge of NSW. Due to the inadequacies of the original building, it was determined that a new building was required. An initial scheme was submitted for development consent in 1970; however, this was modified and a revised scheme, prepared by the well-regarded firm of Joseland & Gilling, was submitted in 1973 and building approval was finally granted on 28 July 1975. This scheme consisted of a five storey podium housing the lodge rooms and associated facilities, two basements, and a twenty-two storey office tower (see Figure 4). Construction of the podium level only was completed in 1978 and the centre officially opened on 10 March 1979 (see Figure 5).

![Figure 4: Original Goulburn Street elevation approved in 1976 showing the unbuilt tower.](image)

*City of Sydney, 823/2E/74.*
In 2001, approval was obtained for the construction of a glazed café and lobby between the existing frontage and the street boundary to a design by Peddle Thorp and Walker. At the same time, approval was granted for modifications to the original tower design involving the addition of three levels and other minor changes; there was no change, however, to the general appearance of the tower or its originally conceived splayed base. Both the glazed enclosure and the tower were completed by 2005 and represent the building in its current form (see Figures 6, 7 and 8).
Figure 7: The completed glazed cafeteria and painted surfaces of the present building showing the tower above.

Figure 8: The completed tower above the original podium level.
4.3 The Brutalist Movement in Australia

The City of Sydney, Planning Proposal – Central Sydney Modern Movement heritage items puts the case that the Sydney Masonic Centre warrants listing as a local heritage item due to its value as

‘an outstanding example of the Brutalist architectural style and demonstrates many of its characteristics – strong and expressive shapes in reinforced concrete, bold curved elements, texture provided by building materials and large unbroken wall surfaces.’

The Masonic Centre was designed and constructed during a period of rapid change. The fabric of Australian society was changing under the influence of world-wide trends and an increasing migrant population. The 1960s and 1970s were:

‘... audacious decades of daring, controversy, creativity and non-conformity, when conventions were broken, values rejected and the cult of the individual arose. It was the time of mini-skirted women, long-haired men and the Beatles...’

A new generation of Post War II educated architects had emerged into a world where communication had improved and architectural publication broadened; there was a growing acceptance of ‘modern architecture’ by clients and, to some extent, the building industry:

‘Criticism flourished on a comfortable foundation of the public acceptance of Modernism.’

Modern architecture had begun to make an impression on the Australian scene during the 1930s. A consolidated modern movement, however, did not get underway until the late 1940s, at which time it followed the lead of architects such as Harry Seidler and Sydney Anchor.

During the 1950s and 1960s, new building forms appeared in Australian cities to challenge the architect and builder. In response to high land prices and the availability of new technologies, high rise office blocks broke through old height limits; the large-scale regional shopping centre and the multi-storey car park

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3 For further discussion see Donald Leslie Johnson, Australian Architecture 1901-51 Sources of Modernism, NSW, Sydney University Press, 1980, p.85 ff.
began to appear. For the Australian building industry of the 1960s, the key words were ‘growth, expansion and development.’

The impact of the new building materials and technology of the twentieth century on architecture should not be under-estimated. As surmised by Robin Boyd in 1963:

‘...although artistic values may not change, new rules are needed now. For one thing, the effects of industry remove the architecture of this half of the twentieth century from anything but academic connection with the great buildings of the past.’

When, during the 1960s and 1970s, Australian architecture broke away from the simplicity demanded by the (then) prevailing Functionalist styles of the preceding decades towards more towards more sculptural and often extroverted forms of expression, was generally conforming to world wide trends. This entailed a move away from lightness and minimalism in design and construction-long established tenants of modern architecture- towards expressions of ‘weight, toughness and elaborate articulation.’ The robust and raw architecture that resulted had been inspired by the later works of Le Corbusier. Peter and Alison Smithson in England provided the theoretical leadership for what was then dubbed the ‘New Brutalist Movement’. The first recognised Brutalist building was the Smithton’s Hunstanton Secondary School in Norfolk, England, 1949-54.

The New Brutalist Movement represented the ‘first consistent assault on the classical conception of beauty’ from within the realm of architecture. As had occurred in Modern Art, even those objects that are ‘ugly’ in a conventional sense may be intensely stimulating and thus pleasurable. The New Brutalists learnt from Le Corbusier’s direct use of materials, to which they then gave their own moral meaning:

‘The Brutalist ethic was one of social concern, urban responsibility and integrity in the expression of material, structure and function. The aesthetic, in theory, would be a powerful image that derived from these considerations.’

The principal concepts of the New Brutalism-

(1) Memorability as an Image,
(2) Clear exhibition of structure and
(3) Valuation of materials ‘as found’-
-were not unique to the movement. The difference arose from the degree
to which they were taken...and in the case of the Smithsons it is the Nth.”

The New Brutalist movement had a profound impact on Australian architecture
in direct and indirect ways. Some Australian architects drew on the ethics of the
movement, while others worked primarily with its visual attributes.

During the 1960s, evidence of New Brutalist influences could most readily be
found in the buildings of the Sydney School, a regional movement that modified
Brutalism with a combination of the influences of the Art and Crafts movement,
traditional Japanese architecture and the work of Frank Lloyd Wright.\footref{11}

During the 1970s, a more stringent form of ‘beton brut’ became a popular
medium for public and commercial buildings. The favoured material was
reinforced concrete showing the imprint of its formwork. Architects working in
this style stretched the limits of how this material could be shaped.
Paradoxically, given the emphasis placed on materials being used as ‘found’, great
attention had to be paid to the design and quality of that form work:

‘...enormous care had to be taken to obtain exactly the right
degree of ‘artless’ roughness.’\footref{12}

Work in this idiom appears aggressive, uncompromising, chunky, and over-
scaled, often with an extroverted display of structure and services. Materials and
other functional components were expressed as a fundamental part of the
building aesthetic. Decorative cladding and surface finishes such as paint or
render were generally eschewed in favour of raw unfinished concrete, often
carefully executed and bearing the imprint of the original formwork, while
building services were often externalised and utilised for their aesthetic effect.\footref{13}

In its purest form, New Brutalism as not a ‘long lived’ architectural movement. As
the validity and relevance of such an unadorned and abstract form of aesthetics
was brought into question in the 1970s, the movement stalled:

‘...the clichés of the critique made no distinction between the
bland simplicity and intense formal purification of the best
modern architecture. However, this wholesale rejection fitted a
public mood of dissatisfaction with the debased modern

\footref{13} *Ibid.*, p. 252
movement, and served the polemic not to attempt fine distinctions..."\(^{14}\)

The principal Australian architects working in the Brutalist Style in the 1960s-early 1980s included Edward Madigan, Torzillo & Briggs; Harry Seidler; Anchor, Mortlock, Murray and Woolley; John Andrews; and Cameron, Chisholm and Nichol. Examples of New Brutalist buildings in Australia include:

- Harold Holt Swimming Centre, Malvern (1967). Architect: Kevin Borland and Daryl Jackson

Table 1 identifies examples within the City of Sydney and their current heritage status. Australian Institute of Architect’s (AIA) Register of Significant Buildings in NSW date from the register of July 2018. This register is not a statutory register.

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<th>Building Name</th>
<th>Architect</th>
<th>Heritage Status</th>
<th>Image</th>
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<tr>
<td>UTS Tower, No. 15 Broadway, Ultimo (1968-75)</td>
<td>NSW Government Architect, Michael Dysart project architect</td>
<td>Statutory: Not listed. Non-Statutory: None.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Ancher Mortlock and Woolley</td>
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<tr>
<td>Former Regent Hotel, Sydney, No. 199 George Street (1982).</td>
<td>Davis Heather and Dysart</td>
<td>Statutory: Not listed. Non-Statutory: None.</td>
<td><img src="external_image_url" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4 The Architects

The firm of Joseland and Gilling was established in 1919 by Richard George Howard Joseland and Frederick Glynn Gilling. During the 1920s, the firm designed buildings, largely houses, in a variety of styles. Joseland retired in the late 1920s; Gilling, however, retained the name of the firm. After his retirement, his son, Ronald Andrew Gilling, a partner from 1948, continued to firm. According to Noni Body, the firm became largely commercial, designing substantial Brutalist buildings including the Masonic Centre and the first stage of the former Qantas Tower (see above).¹⁵

These are the only two examples of the work of Joseland and Gilling in the Brutalist Style identified through readily available resources. All of the examples of their work identified on the State Heritage Register and the State Heritage Inventory are Pre-World War II buildings. One other site containing a Post World War II period building designed by the firm is listed on the State Heritage Inventory (Sydney LEP 2012), being the Former Colonial Mutual Life Building in Martin Place. This Victorian period building was gutted in 1975, retaining only the Free Classical Style façade and a new building erected behind, designed by Joseland and Gilling. This site is not, however, listed on the basis of its association with Joseland and Gilling but because of the remnant Victorian period façade.¹⁶

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¹⁶ Former Colonial Mutual Life Building Façade, Martin Place, Sydney. State Heritage Inventory Database No.: 2423826.
5 PHYSICAL ANALYSIS

5.1 Preamble

The purpose of this section is to identify the character of the site and its setting.

5.2 The Site

The Site is located on the very prominent north western corner of the intersection of Castlereagh and Goulburn Streets. Adjacent the site to the west is the Civic Hotel and to the north is Museum Towers. Opposite the site to the south is the Lionel Bowen Building containing the Family Court of NSW while to the east is John Madison Tower and diagonally opposite the site to the south east is the Goulburn Street Car Park. This is a prominent vehicular and pedestrian thoroughfare and the site is highly conspicuous in this location (see Figure 2).

5.3 The Existing Building

5.3.1 Summary

The subject site comprises (see Figure 1):

- The Sydney Masonic Centre (279-283 Castlereagh Street, Sydney (Lot 1, DP 1067328));
- The Associate Café (285 Castlereagh Street, Sydney (Lot 3, DP 1067328)); and
- The Civic Tower (66 Goulburn Street, Sydney (Lot 2, DP 1067328)).

The Civic Tower is integrated with the site but is accessed and operated separately.

5.3.2 Sydney Masonic Centre

The Sydney Masonic Centre, the first of the current buildings to be constructed on the site, consists of up to six storeys (some internal spaces span several floors) with two levels of basement car parking. The building is centred around the large grand lodge room which is augmented by several smaller lodge rooms, a large banquet hall, offices, meeting rooms, function rooms, a public foyer and support spaces. The main foyer contains a large fabric wall artwork. A separate public foyer accessed from Goulburn Street provides access to the lift lobby of the Civic Tower which rises above.

The building is arranged around a diagonal axis running through the corner of the site. Set on this axis is the central grand lodge room, the form of which is expressed externally on the corner of the building. Symmetrically arranged around the main axis on either side of the lodge room are two pairs of vertical concrete stair shafts which frame, respectively, the entrance to the masonic
centre itself and the entry to the office tower above. Subsidiary spaces are arranged around these principal compositional elements (see Figure 9). The building is stepped outwards from a narrow base towards a dominant overhanging upper level which contains offices and meeting rooms behind a windowless external face (see Figure 7).

![Figure 9: Second floor plan approved in 1976 showing the arrangement of elements around a diagonal axis and the monumental entry portals containing concrete stair shafts arranged symmetrically around the axis.](image)

City of Sydney, 823/2E/74

The principal construction material, both internally and externally, is unfinished off-form concrete (the face of the upper level is painted) with frameless glass infill and travertine stone flooring along with some sections of vertical timber panelling internally.

5.3.3 The Associate Cafe

A cafeteria, not associated with the functions of the centre, is wrapped around the outside of the corner of the building between the main lodge room and the corner street boundary beneath the overhanging upper levels (see Figure 10). It is enclosed by frameless glass panels supported by stainless steel suspension cables hanging from the underside of the overhanging concrete structure above. The interior consists of a conventional fit-out upon a timber framed plinth.
5.3.4 The Civic Tower

The Civic Tower consists of a commercial office building rising 24 storeys above the top of the podium level comprising the Masonic Centre (see Figure 8). Although the lift lobby is located in the main body of the Masonic Centre building, it is functionally separate with a separate street entry. The tower is located to the west of the grand lodge room (rather than above it) but echoes its form with its curved corners and an angular cantilever at its base. In contrast with the podium, however, the material is smooth faced concrete coated with a cream paint finish while the underside of the angular cantilever is clad in lightweight modular panels (see Figure 17).

5.4 Architectural Analysis

The Masonic Centre is strongly characteristic of brutalist movement architecture. The external form, which is crafted around the shape of the principal lodge room, is an expression of the interior programme while the supporting structure is clearly expressed as part of angular composition of interplaying geometric shapes. The heavy cantilevered upper level hovering unsupported over the footway below defies conventional architectural practice to create an overpowering scale while the windowless walls of rough-cast in-situ concrete complete the aggressive and uncompromising character.

In contrast, the café is a delicately executed glass structure with expressed stainless-steel cable supports constructed in and early 21st century minimalist idiom. The interior is a conventional commercial fit-out which wraps around the outer wall of the grand lodge with a disabled access ramp, commercial kitchen and associated shelving and art work on the walls.

The office tower is, with the exception of the angular cantilevered base, a relatively conventional tower building. Although superficially built in accordance with the original 1974 design drawings by Joseland & Gilling, it has none of the characteristics of form or material associated with brutalist buildings. The interesting structural support for the cantilevered tower is hidden under lightweight cladding (rather than exposed as a feature as it would in a true brutalist building) while the external concrete façade is simply over-coated with cream paint (see Figure 17). The tower itself is square in plan with slightly rounded corners to follow the theme of the podium. Apart from the cantilevered base, the principal architectural device is the use of closely spaced concrete fins running up the façade to provide a strong sense of verticality to an otherwise simple and unremarkable façade comprising regularly spaced window openings.
5.5 **Integrity of the Sydney Masonic Centre**

The original Masonic Centre building has been subject to a number of alterations and additions since its completion in 1979. These include:

- The painting of the off-form concrete on the upper level front façade overhanging the street (see Figure 11).
- The construction of the glazed café space on the corner of the site between the front of the grand lodge room and the front property boundary (see Figure 12).
- The glazed enclosure at the front property boundary of the forecourt to the Goulburn Street lift lobby (see Figure 13).
- The cladding of the Goulburn Street stair shafts in aluminium sandwich panel (see Figure 16).
- The removal of the original radial pattern tiling between the front walls of the site and the street boundary (see Figure 15).
- Refitting of bathrooms and utility areas.

Although much of the original fabric, including the interiors, is intact, these changes have applied a substantial additional layer to the most prominent public elements of the building. The glazed café conceals much of the front of the original building at its most prominent corner and significantly dilutes the emphatic and dramatic effect of the angular base and the cantilevered upper floor (compare Figures 10 and 11). Even in the interior, where the original façade material should be most visible, it is concealed by a clutter of access ramps (see Figures 15 and 16), wall decorations and café fit out including furniture, wall shelving, kitchen enclosures and the like (see Figure 14). It would also have concealed the original radial pattern tiling between the front walls of the site and the street boundary but this appears to have been entirely removed and replaced with generic commercial floor tiles (see Figure 15).

Similarly, the glazed enclosure along Goulburn Street conceals the original twin concrete stair shafts which were designed as a monumental frame to the tower entry and a symmetrical pair to the same device on the Castlereagh Street entry (compare Figure 4 & Figure 13). Although constructed in glass and theoretically semi-transparent, these elements have a substantial visual impact upon the most public elements of the building and fundamentally alter its character stripping it of much of its assertive and overbearing scale and its uncompromising relationship to the street edge. They also reduce the relevance of the angular cantilever on the Civic Tower which was intended to create a dialogue with similar cantilever at the ground level corner (see Figure 4).

The painting of part of the off-form concrete façade and the cladding of the Goulburn Street stair shafts conceal the original carefully executed off-form
concrete surfaces and disguise the materiality of the construction. These changes have consequently significantly eroded the quality of the building as an example of brutalist architecture by removing or degrading its key characteristics including the emphatic scale, processional site planning, the expression of structure and the candid expression of the construction materials.

Figure 10: The building in its original form c. 1989. *Identifying Australian Architecture.*

Figure 11: The painted upper level façade, glazed café enclosure and the Civic Tower above.
Figure 12: The glazed café enclosure concealing the bold off-form concrete forms beneath.

Figure 13: The glazed enclosure of the Goulburn Street entry portals.
Figure 14: The clutter of the glazed café enclosure concealing the original off-form concrete external walls.

Figure 15: The new floor tiles and clutter of the café including access ramp concealing the original external off-form concrete facade.
6 HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

6.1.1 Assessment of Significance

6.1.2 Existing Citations and Listings

The site is not:

- Listed as a heritage item by the State Heritage Register under the auspices of the *NSW Heritage Act 1977*.
- Listed as a heritage item by Schedule 7 of the *Sydney LEP 2012*.
- Located within a Conservation Area as defined by this plan.
- Not located within the immediate vicinity of a Conservation Area as defined by this plan.

The site is:

- Located within the immediate vicinity of heritage items heritage item by Schedule 7 of the *Sydney LEP 2012*.

6.1.3 Literature Review

A review of the key literature covering brutalist architecture in Australia reveals that the site is referenced in the following publications:

It is used as one of a number of examples of Australian Brutalist buildings. It is noted, however, that this publication predates the modifications to the site and the building is represented here in its original form.


The interiors are used as one of a number of examples of large-scale ceremonial entrances and cavernous reception areas typical of Australian Brutalist buildings.


This article provides a brief discussion of the structural engineering challenges associated with the construction of the tower. The focus is not, however, on the architectural qualities of the building.

The site is not referenced in these key works:


The Masonic Centre has received only brief mention in the literature as an example of Brutalism in New South Wales and then only prior to modification or in relation to its unaltered entry spaces. In none of the published works does it receive clear focus individually or is it lauded as a fine example of the idiom.

### 6.1.4 Draft Listings and Heritage Studies

The site is recommended for listing as a local heritage item in:


The site is not listed by the

6.1.5 **Significance of Sydney Masonic Centre**

6.1.6 **Preamble**

Once the historical and physical evidence has been established, it is possible to assess the heritage significance of a place. The Australian ICOMOS Burra Charter defines heritage significance as ‘aesthetic, historic, scientific or spiritual value for past, present or future generations.’

Heritage significance may relate to how rare or representative a place may be and or its relationship to its setting and context, whether historical, contemporary, physical or social. It may relate to the place as a whole or to some of its components. The NSW Heritage Office has developed a series of criteria based on the principles of the Burra Charter. These criteria are as follows.

Few of the aspects of significance discussed below are exclusive: a characteristic may, for example, have both historical and aesthetic significance.

6.1.7 **Assessment Under NSW Heritage Division Criterion**

The State Heritage Inventory listing sheet for this item provides the following, very limited, assessment of significance.

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### Criteria

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<th>Criteria</th>
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<tr>
<td>a) Historical Significance</td>
<td>The site of the Sydney Masonic Centre has long associations with freemasonry in Sydney, in particular the United Grand Lodge, which has occupied its northern section after the completion of the so-called New Masonic Hall in Castlereagh Street in January 1884.</td>
<td>The long historical association with the site of freemasonry is not disputed. Despite this, the significance of freemasonry itself and that of the Grand United Lodge can be ascribed to any location where Masonic meetings take place.</td>
<td>Provides evidence of activities or processes that are of dubious historical importance: A long historical association with freemasonry is not, in itself, of particular historical significance. Such a claim could be made for numerous other sites without warranting their listing.</td>
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<td>b) Historical Association Significance</td>
<td>The Sydney Masonic Centre has strong associations with the United Grand Lodge, which was formed in the 1870s. The building is associated with the prominent architectural firm of Joseland &amp; Gilling. It is one of several innovative buildings designed by the firm during the late 1960s and the first half of the 1970s.</td>
<td>The association with the United Grand Lodge and the architectural firm of Joseland &amp; Gilling is not disputed.</td>
<td>Provides evidence of people or events that are of dubious historical importance: A strong association with the United Grand Lodge is not, in itself, of particular historical significance. <strong>Has been altered so that it is no longer able to provide evidence of a particular association:</strong> The building has been significantly modified, in particular on the exterior, so that it no longer retains the core architectural features.</td>
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### Criteria | Draft Inventory Assessment | Comment | Guidelines for Exclusion
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c) Aesthetic/Technical Significance | The Sydney Masonic Centre is an outstanding and powerful example of the Brutalist architectural style, with a monumental interior that ranks amongst the finest interiors in Sydney from the second half of the 20th century. It is an important landmark and streetscape element in this section of Sydney. The Sydney Masonic Centre demonstrates a very high standard of off-form concrete construction. The Civic Tower has aesthetic significance because it closely follows Joseland & Gilling’s original intention for the development of the site in the 1970s. The Civic Tower is | The quality of the original architectural design is not disputed nor the quality of its execution. Much of this quality, however, derived from the splayed corner podium rising to the assertive cantilevered canopy. This original architectural intent has been fundamentally altered by the external modifications undertaken in 2001-2003 and the building has lost a fundamental element of its Brutalist characteristics. In particular, this includes the painting of the off-form concrete and the construction of a glass façade at the base of the building. Although the building is a recognisable landmark, this in itself does not warrant listing. The standard of off-form concrete construction, although high, also does not in itself warrant listing. Even if this were not | Has lost its design or technical integrity: As noted in this report, the original design integrity has been fundamentally damaged such that the building no longer expresses its original architectural intent and is no longer representative of the architectural movement with which it is associated. The tower element, although superficially consistent with the original design, has been executed in a manner which deviates in critical aspects from the original design vision and has no technical integrity as an example of the brutalist movement. Its positive visual or sensory appeal or landmark and scenic qualities have been more than temporarily degraded: The glazed enclosure of the façade and the attendant internal fit out including the
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<td>notable for its method of construction, being supported off its central lift core. The Mona Hessing artwork, which was commissioned for the building, is regarded as one her finest works.</td>
<td>the case, the original concrete has been so obscured with a new glass façade, internal fit out and paint finishes that it has lost its fundamental integrity as an element of the original architectural vision. The Civic Tower, although generally consistent with the original Joseland &amp; Gilling design, has been executed with significant variations which render it uncharacteristic of both the original design vision and Brutalist work generally. These include the use of painted external finishes (rather than the off form concrete pre-cast panels originally proposed) and the use of a superficial cladding to achieve the original design appearance of the sloping tower undercroft (rather than expressing the structure itself which, though potentially aesthetically interesting, is now concealed). The structural elements themselves are a product of 21st century engineering while the tower itself, although aesthetically well-</td>
<td>cladding of the off-form concrete curved stair shafts is theoretically reversible but would entail the loss of lettable space and consequently is likely to remain in place more than temporarily. The application of painted finishes to parts of the off-form concrete façade compromises the fundamental architectural character of the building and is extremely difficult to reverse.</td>
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<td>mannered, is unremarkable and not in itself deserving of listing.</td>
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<td>The quality of the Mona Hessing artwork is not disputed but does not rely exclusively on the building for the retention of its quality or for display.</td>
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<td>d) Social/Cultural Significance</td>
<td>The building's social significance has not been ascertained. It has potential social significance for the mason community and architectural community.</td>
<td>Although the site has a specific and longstanding association with Freemasonry, the same could be said of many sites and is not particularly remarkable. It would not in itself warrant listing.</td>
<td>Is only important to the community for amenity reasons: There is no evidence to suggest that the community of Freemasons applies any special significance to the building other than that associated with its amenity for Masonic activities.</td>
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<td>e) Research Significance</td>
<td>No technical or research significance is suggested.</td>
<td>Only contains information that is readily available from other resources of archaeological sites: Although the method of construction is technically interesting, this information is</td>
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<tr>
<td>f) Rarity</td>
<td>The Sydney Masonic Centre is a rare example of a Masonic building from the second half of the 20th century in the City of Sydney.</td>
<td>Freemasonry rose in popularity through the early and mid-part of the twentieth century, the greater proportion of Masonic buildings. By the second half of the century, the number of Masons was in decline and there was no reason for a building program. Ascribing rarity of the building as a place where Freemasons assemble to a particular period does not acknowledge the ubiquity of Masonic Halls and Temples across Sydney, the State and the Nation.</td>
<td>Is not rare: The building, as a place for Freemasons to assemble is not rare. That few Masonic Halls or Temples were built in the latter half of the 20th century is a very narrow category in terms of rarity.</td>
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<td>g) Representative</td>
<td>The building represents an outstanding example of post-world war II architecture in the brutalist style and off-form concrete construction.</td>
<td>The quality of the original building as a fine example of the brutalist style and the associated use of off-form concrete is not disputed. The original design intent, however, has been significantly degraded by additions and alterations in the early 2000s. Although lightweight and theoretically reversible, these have been placed. In the most prominent location of Does not include or has lost the range of characteristics of a type: The building has lost many of the key characteristics of its type including: • The original aggressive sculptural presentation to the street corner which was the principal component of the building’s architectural character, has been lost with</td>
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Weir Phillips Heritage and Planning | Sydney Masonic Centre | Heritage Analysis
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<td>the site and fundamentally alter the relationship of the building to the street in a way which, although more sensitive to current thinking on appropriate urban form, is at odds with the design ethos inherent in the original design and the architectural movement which spawned it.</td>
<td>the addition of a glazed enclosure and an internal café fit out.</td>
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<td>• Off-form concrete columns fronting Goulburn Street have been internalised in a glazed enclosure and clad in aluminium to conceal their original materiality.</td>
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<td>• The original pavement finish between the front of the podium undercroft and the street boundary which echoed the radial lines of the structure above has been removed and replaced with a generic tiled finish, enclosed with glass and largely covered by a café fit out.</td>
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<td>• The podium fascia has been painted to conceal the original off-form concrete finish.</td>
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This analysis demonstrates that either the criteria for listing are not satisfied. In particular the key reason for listing as an example of Brutalist architecture is not met due to the extensive alterations to the building over time.

Many of the changes have been undertaken to deliberately rid the building of its Brutalist characteristics and in so doing change the building so fundamentally as to make it hardly recognisable as a Brutalist building. Consequently, there is inadequate justification for the listing of the building.

6 Discussion

6.1 Architectural Character

Although the original building was an prominent example of the Brutalist movement, it has since undergone substantial alteration which was deliberately aimed at softening its Brutalist characteristics and consequently greatly degraded its significance as both an example of the work of Joseland and Gilling and, particularly, as an example of the Brutalist style. The additions to the façade, although theoretically lightweight and transparent to be respectful of the original structure behind, are highly visible, located in the most prominent part of the building, and significantly alter the relationship of the building to the street to create an inviting and urbane frontage. Although consistent with current urban design thinking, this intervention is fundamentally at odds with the Brutalist idiom expressed in the almost aggressive sculptural qualities of the original with its attendant emphasis on the expression of construction material and in particular the plastic qualities of concrete and external expression of the internal functions.

The original corner treatment clearly expressed the form of the principal lodge room within (the central symbolic space of the building) with its tiered seating providing external expression in an assertive angular form extending outwards and upwards with expressed concrete structural webs from a narrow base to an emphatic overhanging form containing secondary spaces above (see Figure 10). This inverted the conventional architectural approach of stepping a building back from the base to the top and created visual drama by breaking this pattern. Set on a diagonal axis bisecting the site, this key corner element was then framed by two pairs of double curved stair shafts forming entrances to the lodge and the future tower on each street frontage respectively to complete a diagonally symmetrical street composition (see Figure 9). The structure was then completed in carefully executed rough finished off-form concrete in an honest expression of the materials and structural system. Finally, the ground level space between the corner of the podium and the street boundary was tiled in a radial
pattern to echo the structural concrete webs supporting the overhanging structure above.

The original design also included a tower which was not executed at the time. It was to be supported from the central lift shaft to cantilever over an angular base positioned above the podium below to echo the form of the principal lodge room on the corner of the podium itself. The angled base was to consist of supporting exposed concrete webs in a further reference to the podium structure. This tower was to be clad in pre-cast concrete panels which would have been left in a raw finish in the same manner as the rest of the building (see Figure 4).

The additions made in the early 2000s, however, effectively concealed the base of the principal lodge room and fundamentally altered the architectural expression by disguising the form of these principal spaces and filling in the void beneath the overhang to eliminate the majority of the architectural drama it created. It also eliminated the clear visual relationship between the angled overhang at the corner of the podium and the angled overhang at the base of the tower. The glazed enclosure was also extended around the Goulburn Street frontage and disguised the matching pair of curved stair shafts to disrupt the original symmetry of the podium. Further, the additions completely removed the original external radial paving pattern which referenced the structural elements above.

Although much of the original materiality was retained, the prominent face of the overhang was painted in a cream colour thus concealing its material, separating it from the unpainted supporting structure below and giving it more refined but completely different architectural character. The now internal off-form concrete of the Goulburn Street stair shafts were also clad in aluminium sandwich panels, concealing the original material and once again altering the original architectural intent. These seemingly minor interventions completely subverted the original intent of the architect to use raw, unfinished materials expressed as an integral part of the architectural character.

Although the tower was ultimately constructed, based to an extent on the original design, it varied from it in a number of critical ways. The precast concrete panel façade was replaced by painted smooth finished in-situ concrete; the angled supporting webs, designed to mimic those on the podium, were replaced with an angled supporting substructure concealed under a lightweight modular cladding designed to mimic the original design (see Figure 17). Once again, this deviated from the original architectural intent, and the core elements of the Brutalist movement, by concealing, rather than expressing, both the structural method and the materiality.
Figure 17: The underside of the Civic Tower showing both the superficial lightweight cladding on the angled underside concealing the structure beneath and the smooth painted concrete surface of the façade above.

These modifications were an attempt to reshape the building into a more human scale, more people friendly, more polished and more consistent with current thinking regarding urban design which is, in itself, a reaction to the Brutalist idiom. The result is dramatically different in its effect from the building which was originally conceived and has none of the emphatic uncompromising form, overpowering scale and tough, honest expression of materiality which characterises the Brutalist idiom.

The modifications to the tower design may seem less consequential but renders it clearly a product of the early 2000s and not of the Brutalist movement. The tower walls were originally conceived as carefully finished pre-cast concrete panels left unpainted to express the natural character of their materials. More importantly, the angled underside of the tower was to have consisted of unfinished concrete clearly expressing the actual form of the structure; it would never have been clad to present a different superficial external appearance. The use of paint and, especially, of an external modular light weight undercroft cladding, is inconsistent with the spirit of the Brutalist movement which the tower was intended to emulate. The tower, consequently, fails to authentically complete the original architectural vision for the site and demonstrates little relationship to the Brutalist origins of the podium building.
Given the extent to which the original design and architectural qualities of the building have been compromised, the Sydney Masonic Centre is no longer either an outstanding or representative example of Brutalist architecture.

7 IMPOSITION OF LISTING

With listing of a building of this age and size comes a series of impositions far greater than with listings of more modest buildings. While some office buildings have been listed and continue to function successfully, buildings such as the former Sydney Masonic Centre create a range of additional impositions that create a disproportionate burden on the owner, including:

- Office buildings of this type now have an established lifecycle. As requirements for office space change, along with requirement for energy efficiency and occupant facilities, economic pressure demands the building be replaced. This is particularly relevant in terms of energy efficiency. Many organisations including the State Government require a high level of energy efficiency in buildings. This becomes much more difficult to achieve with older office buildings.

- As the building ages further its class of office space will be gradually downgraded with the consequence of lower rental incomes. To arrest this major refurbishment will be required. There is a strong co-relation between the capital cost of refurbishment and the amount of rental lift possible. This will only work if other requirements such as energy efficiency can be met.

- The building, once listed, would have to be conserved, regardless of economic considerations and could be demolished only in the most exceptional circumstances. The building podium was designed specifically as a headquarters for Freemasons. Should their requirements change and they no longer need the building, there will be major issues in terms of reasonable adaptive reuse. This essentially sterilises an important central city site.

8 CONCLUSION

This heritage analysis does not support the proposed listing of the Sydney Masonic Centre at No. 279-285 Castlereagh Street and 66 Goulburn Street because it does not meet the threshold for listing as a heritage item under the NSW Heritage Branch criterion; nor are the reasons for listing given by the Planning Proposal – Central Sydney Modern Movement heritage items supported upon detailed assessment.

In particular:

- The connection of the site to freemasonry in Sydney and its association with the United Grand Lodge is of limited historical
importance and only exists while the site is occupied for its current purpose. In this respect, it is no different from many other sites in New South Wales which also perform similar functions.

- The association of the building with the prominent architectural firm of Joseland & Gilling has been greatly compromised by extensive alterations which have substantially eroded the original architectural intent. While noted as having designed buildings in the Brutalist Style, they are not particularly identified with the style.

- The building has been altered over time to a point where it has lost its design integrity as an example of the Brutalist Style and those changes cannot be reversed. There are better preserved examples of this style of building.

- Its identifiability as a city landmark is not unique and is of minimal historical importance.

- Its use of high quality off-form concrete construction is not unique and is of limited historical importance.

- The Civic Tower is an early 2000s construction, is a flawed realisation of the original design and is not representative of the finishes and detail of a building in the Brutalist style. In particular, the visual relationship created by the dialogue between the angled cantilever below the tower and the angled cantilever at the corner of the podium has been destroyed by the glazed infill of the corner of the podium.

- The Mona Hessing artwork is not reliant upon the building for its significance or preservation.

- The fact that it is a rare example of a Masonic building from the second half of the 20th century in Sydney is of limited historical importance.

- It is no longer an outstanding example of Brutalist architecture or off-form concrete construction as its key characteristics have been compromised by later additions and some of the off-form concrete surfaces have been painted over or clad with other materials.

Given this analysis, it is submitted that the Sydney Masonic Centre does not meet the threshold for listing under the criteria NSW Heritage Branch and thus should not be listed as a heritage item on the Sydney LEP 2012.