

# Recommendation of the Executive Director and assessment of cultural heritage significance under Part 3, Division 7 of the *Heritage Act 2017*

<b>Name</b>	Titles Office
<b>Location</b>	247-283 Queen Street, Melbourne
<b>Date Registered</b>	20 August 1982
<b>VHR Number</b>	VHR H1529
<b>VHR Categor(ies)</b>	Heritage Place
<b>Hermes Number</b>	2975



Titles Office (1985) showing building without tree coverage.



Titles Office (2017) showing building with tree coverage.

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE HERITAGE COUNCIL:**

To amend the existing registration of VHR H1529 in accordance with s.62 of the *Heritage Act 2017* by:

- Adding land.

Under s.49(1)(d) of the *Heritage Act 2017* the Heritage Council may include additional land to registered places.

### **Reasons for the proposed amendment:**

This building was gazetted in 1982 in the Register of Government Buildings (GBR). At that time no land was able to be registered. The Titles Office registration requires updating to add sufficient land to protect the cultural heritage significance of the place, and to provide clarity for proposed works at the place.

The existing registration documentation is provided at Attachment 1 of this report.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steven Avery'.

**STEVEN AVERY**  
Executive Director

**Recommendation Date:** 11 January 2018

## **AMENDMENT BACKGROUND**

An application to amend the registration for the Titles Office by adding land was made by the Executive Director on 21 December 2017. The application was prompted by a need to provide clarity around this registration in the context of proposed works at the place.

The Titles Office was gazetted in 1982 in the Register of Government Buildings (GBR) and administratively amended in 1988. At that time no land was able to be registered. The existing Titles Office registration only includes the buildings and not the land on which they sit or an appropriate curtilage. In 1998, all buildings in the GBR were transferred to the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) which was established with the introduction of the Victorian *Heritage Act 1995*. These early registrations are now being updated by adding land.

Under s.49(1)(d) of the *Heritage Act 2017* the Heritage Council may include additional land to registered places.

## **CURRENT EXTENT OF REGISTRATION**

Melbourne City

Queen Street, City.

i) 283: Titles Office

[Victoria Government Gazette No. G39 12 October 1988 p.3091]

No extent diagram accompanies the 1982 registration or the 1988 registration amendment.

## **PROPOSED CATEGORY OF REGISTRATION**

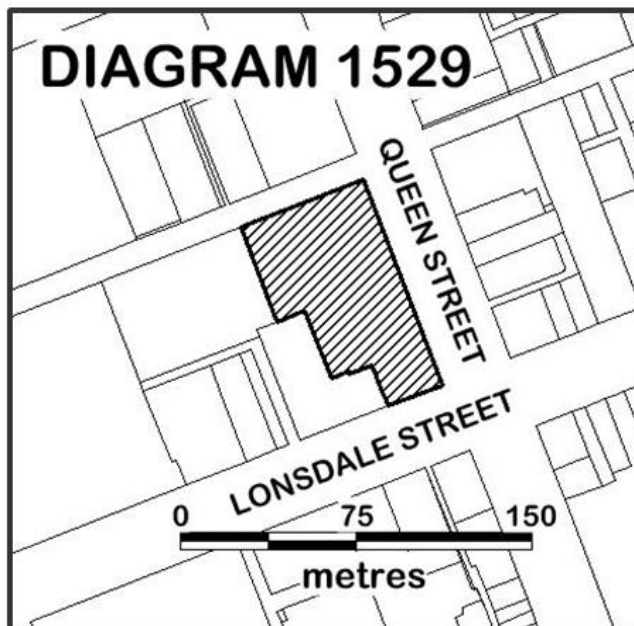
Heritage Place. No change.

## **PROPOSED STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

No change.

## RECOMMENDED EXTENT OF REGISTRATION

All of the place shown hatched on Diagram 1529 encompassing all of Crown Allotment 22, Section 30, City of Melbourne, Parish of Melbourne North.



The extent of registration of the Titles Office in the Victorian Heritage Register affects the whole place shown on Diagram 1529 including the land and all buildings (including the exteriors and interiors), all fixtures attached to the building, landscape elements and other features.

The recommended extent is the same as the nominated extent.

## RATIONALE FOR EXTENT

The proposed extent of registration is the whole place including the cadastral parcel on which the Titles Office complex is located. It is the view of the Executive Director that this area of land will provide an appropriate curtilage and setting to protect the cultural heritage significance of the place.

## AERIAL PHOTO OF THE PLACE SHOWING PROPOSED REGISTRATION



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## RECOMMENDATION REASONS

### REASONS FOR RECOMMENDING THE INCLUSION OF ADDITIONAL LAND IN THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER

The Executive Director recommends that the Heritage Council amend the registration of the Titles Office in accordance with s.62 of the *Heritage Act 2017*. He recommends that the Heritage Council add land to this registration in accordance with s. 49(1)(d) *Heritage Act 2017* on the grounds that:

- (i) The land surrounding the place is important to the protection or conservation of the place.

The architectural, technical and historical significance of the Titles Office has been recognised by its inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR H1529).

The Statement of Significance notes that the Titles Office is historically significant as a building demonstrating the implementation of a new legal system in the 1860s for the recording of land ownership. The *Real Property Act (1862)* introduced the Torrens System to Victoria and after its completion, dealings under the Act were dealt with exclusively from the Titles Office. The building was erected in three stages between 1874 and 1889. It comprises a strong room, an L-shaped two storey office building built around the strong room, and a perimeter office building facing Queen Street, designed by the Public Works Department and attributed to J J Clark.

The Titles Office is architecturally significant for demonstrating the philosophy of the Public Works Department, led by William Wardell until 1878, that architectural style should be as simple as possible so long as proper architectural effect was preserved. This restraint is clearly evident in the severity of the Doric order employed by architect J J Clark but the composition still draws on the Italianate style and on Renaissance palazzos for inspiration to produce a building with serene and sedate grandeur. The Titles Office has one of the most extensive public building facades in Melbourne. The solidity and strength of its design reassured Victoria's nineteenth century landowners that their titles were secure against theft and fire.

The Titles Office is technically significant for the range of fire precaution measures incorporated into the design and construction of the strong room. Its superb interior is an exceptional technical example of early high security and fire-proof construction in Victoria and comprises stone walls, iron window shutters and floors built on the Dennett system, a development of fire resistant construction employing iron bressumers connected by brick arching and covered with a layer of cement.

It is recommended that the whole place including the cadastral block – defined as Crown Allotment 22, Section 30, City of Melbourne, Parish of Melbourne North – be included in the registration.

# ATTACHMENT 1

## EXISTING REGISTRATION DETAILS

### TO BE SUPERSEDED BY THE FOREGOING RECOMMENDATION

## EXISTING CATEGORY OF REGISTRATION

Heritage place

## EXISTING EXTENT OF REGISTRATION

### The existing extent of registration

Melbourne City  
Queen Street, City.  
i) 283: Titles Office  
[Victoria Government Gazette No. G39 12 October 1988 p.3091]

No extent diagram accompanies this registration.

## EXISTING STATEMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

### *What is significant?*

The Titles Office, 283 Queen Street, was erected in three stages. The first stage, begun in 1874 and finished in 1877, comprised an L-shaped two storey office building built around the strong room. The strong room was extended to its present size in 1884-85. Between 1887 and 1889 the perimeter office building was completed to give the current external appearance occupying the full length of a block to Queen Street. The designs for the perimeter structure were undertaken by the Public Works Department and are attributed to J J Clark. The main facade is symmetrical about a central three storey block, and sits on a bluestone plinth. The two storey wings are recessed and terminate in pavilions that project to the same line as the central block. The facade employs the Doric style in a quite severe and plain manner. The rhythm of the paired round arch windows on the ground floor is mimicked by paired columns on the first storey and by pairs of urns on the balustraded parapet. Construction is of rendered brick. The Old Law Office (formerly the Strong Room) has an interior incorporating arched, fire proof floor construction, known as the Dennett system. Fire precautions were essential to protect the irreplaceable Certificate of Titles and other land-related documents that the building houses.

### *How is it significant?*

The Titles Office is of architectural, technical and historical significance to the State of Victoria.

### *Why is it significant?*

The Titles Office is architecturally significant for exemplifying the dictum of the Public Works Department, led by William Wardell until 1878, that architectural style needed to be as simple as possible so long as proper architectural effect was preserved. The restraint is clearly evidenced by the severity of the Doric order employed by architect JJ Clark, and decoratively the building is in contrast to his masterpiece, the Treasury Building of 1858. However, the composition of the Titles Office still draws on the Italianate style and on Renaissance palazzos for inspiration to produce a building with serene and sedate grandeur, and one of the most extensive public building facades in Melbourne.

The Titles Office is technically significant for the range of fire precaution measures employed. The strong room with its superb interior is an exceptional example of early high security and fire-proof construction in Victoria. The floor, built on the Dennett system, is a development of fire resistant construction employing iron bressumers connected by brick arching and covered with a layer of cement.

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The Titles Office is historically significant as a building signifying the change of law for the recording of land ownership. The 1862 Real Property Act introduced the Torrens System to Victoria and dealings under the new Act were dealt with exclusively from the new building.

## **EXISTING PERMIT POLICY**

None.

## **EXISTING PERMIT EXEMPTIONS**

None.