



ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF VICTORIA INC.

239 A'Beckett Street, Melbourne 3000

Statement on the John Curtin Hotel

Thursday, 24 March 2022

The Royal Historical Society of Victoria strongly supports the nomination of the John Curtin Hotel to the Victorian Heritage Register. Indeed, the RHSV has been providing historical information to assist the Trust and Trades Hall with the nomination. On the basis of its historical associations alone, the hotel is clearly of state significance. We note, however, that it is also of some architectural significance. Built in 1915, it was designed in the arts and crafts style by Peck and Kemter, a distinguished firm of architects involved with many iconic Melbourne buildings.

It is also distinctive in Victoria's social history. Our colleague Dr Chris McConville points out that it was one of the last pubs built or rebuilt before the introduction of six o'clock closing in 1916 meant that drinkers had a short time after work to drink enough to keep them happy through the evening. To cater for this demand, the best arrangement was a big, open 'swill'. The John Curtin is one of the last examples of earlier arrangements of bars, when getting drunk was a more leisurely affair.

The Curtin also points to the general failure of Victorian heritage protection. Despite the Hotel's Heritage Overlay, the state has imposed a Design and Development Overlay (DDO) calling for development of up to eight stories. Such DDOs are now common. They bode ill for many highly significant places on the Heritage Overlay, only a few of which will be fortunate enough to qualify for State listing. The RHSV will continue to campaign strongly for reform to restore the integrity of the Heritage Overlay.

Professor Charles Sowerwine, FAHA, FRHSV,
Chair, Heritage Committee,

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