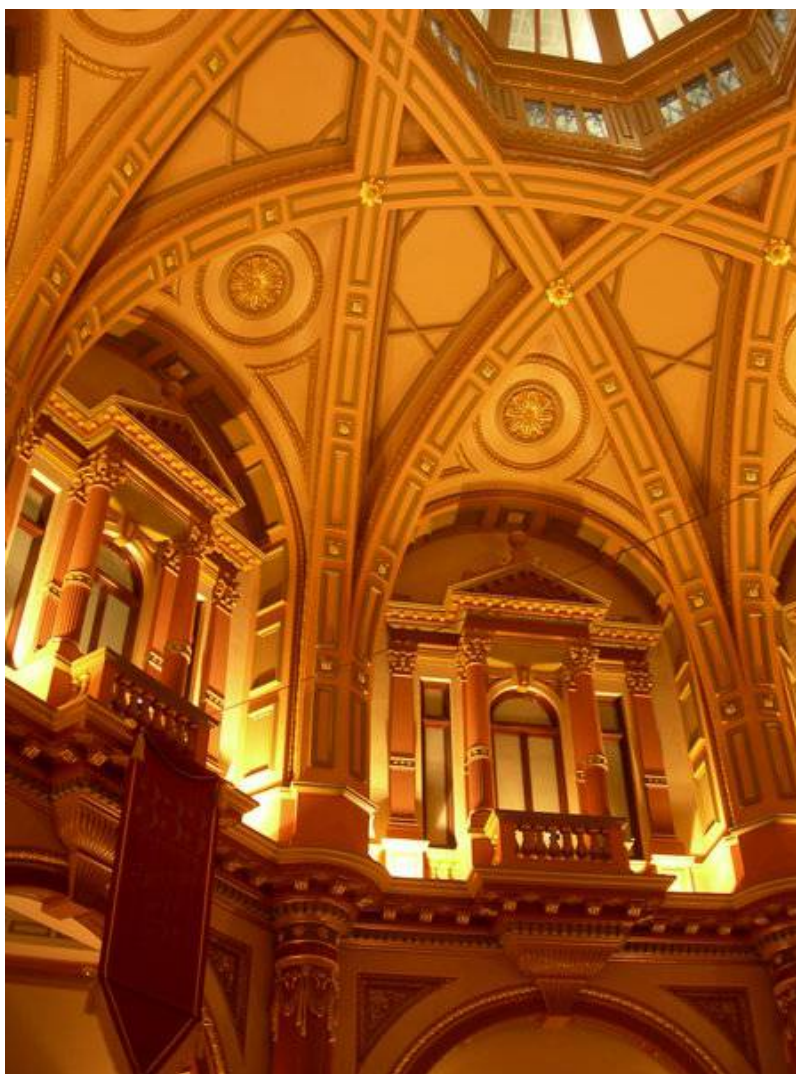


Victorian Heritage Database Report

# FORMER COMMERCIAL BANK OF AUSTRALIA, BANKING CHAMBER AND ENTRANCE

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**Location:**

327-343 COLLINS STREET MELBOURNE, MELBOURNE CITY

**Heritage Status / Level of Significance:**

Registered

**Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number: H0035**

**Listing Authority: VHR**

**Heritage Overlay Number: HO602****Statement of Significance:**

What is significant?

On 1 October 1866 the Commercial Bank of Australia Limited commenced business in the spacious building in Collins Street recently fitted out for their accommodation. Then known as No.30 Collins Street West and renumbered 337 in 1889, this address remained the site of the Bank's principal office in the heart of Melbourne's financial district during its whole 116 year existence, except for the period of rebuilding during the 1890s. The first General Manager of the company was George Vallentine who had been recruited from the Bank of Victoria. The existing Banking Chamber and Entry were part of a new head office which was designed and built in the period 1891-93; a time of great financial crisis for Victoria. The design selected by the Bank was a compromise between independent entries by the two architects Lloyd Tayler and Alfred Dunn. The interior Banking Chamber and facade were derived from Tayler's submission and the office accommodation was mainly due to Dunn who was also responsible for the supervision of the construction. Construction began in 1891 and the building was occupied in July 1893. The building remained substantially unaltered until 1939 when the Collins Street facade was demolished and reconstructed to a new design. In 1990 a 29 storey office building was constructed, incorporating the 1893 Banking Chamber and entrance into the design. The Banking Chamber is octagonal in form, approximately 20 metres in diameter and covered by a great plaster dome with an iron and glass lantern. The height of the dome above the main floor of the chamber is approximately 30 metres with the lantern an additional 15 metres above it. The dome is derived from the octagonal plan by the intersection of arches, recalling the constructional system of the great mosques. The first storey consists of semi-circular arches in the Roman form surrounded by a storey of applied temple fronts of the richest decoration. The floor of the Chamber is a detailed mosaic. The 1893 entry is constructed of stone with large iron gates and a central barrel vaulted ceiling.

How is it significant?

The Banking Chamber and Entrance of the former Commercial Bank of Australia are of aesthetic, architectural and historical importance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The CBA Banking Chamber and Entrance are of architectural and aesthetic importance as remnants of one of the most notable commercial buildings of Melbourne's financial district. The Banking Chamber, entrance vestibule, archway and gates remain from the building erected in 1891-93. Derived from Italian Renaissance and Baroque design the dramatic top-lit Banking Chamber is one of Melbourne's most impressive interiors. The special qualities of the Chamber are embodied in the dome of intersecting ribs and the play of natural light on flat and plastic surfaces, coupled with the skilful resolution of the original functional requirements. The opulent design has been carried through to the joinery, stone entrance and mosaic floor. The structure and its interior are important as the most distinctive work of the architect Lloyd Tayler, as well as his most prestigious commission.

The CBA Banking Chamber and Entrance are of historical importance for their associations with the Commercial Bank of Australia Ltd who had their head office at this site, from 1893 until 1982. The construction of such a grand Banking Chamber represents the early success of the Commercial Bank of Australia due to the Land Boom. By 1888 the peak year of the growth of the metropolitan aspirations of the Marvellous Melbourne, the bank had become the largest in terms of deposits, in the colony of Victoria. Along with other banks in the area the Chamber and Entrance reflects the opulence of Melbourne during the land boom. Its is important as one of the last, and perhaps most exuberant examples of this period which was wiped away in the financial

crash of 1893. The Commercial Bank of Australia, for all its affluence during the Boom period, suffered tremendously in the disastrous crash of the 1890s. The inception and construction of the Banking Chamber bridges this period in the Bank and Victoria's history. The location of the building reflects the long-standing tradition of this part of Collins Street as the focus for Australia's great financial institutions.

Heritage Study / Consultant	
Construction Date Range	1891 - 1893
Architect / Designer	Tayler, Lloyd
Municipality	MELBOURNE CITY
Other names	
Hermes number	731
Property number	

*This place/object may also be State heritage listed. Check the Victorian Heritage Database. For further details, contact the local Council or go to Planning Schemes Online*