

**SUBMISSION ON HERITAGE VICTORIA PERMIT
APPLICATION 33300 IN RELATION TO
(FORMER) SHELL HOUSE, 1 SPRING STREET,
MELBOURNE**



TO HERITAGE VICTORIA.



**Australian
Institute of
Architects**

VICTORIAN CHAPTER

Submission lodged April 2021

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE

Established in 1930, the Australian Institute of (Institute) is the peak body for the Architectural profession in Australia. It is an independent, national member organisation with around 12,000 members across Australia and overseas including 3,300 members in the Victorian Chapter.

The Institute exists to advance the interests of members, their professional standards and contemporary practice, and expand and advocate the value of Architects and Architecture to the sustainable growth of our communities, economy and culture.

The Institute actively works to maintain and improve the quality of our built environment by promoting better, responsible and environmental design.

PURPOSE

- This submission is made by the Australian Institute of Architects (the Institute) Victorian Chapter Heritage Victoria. It responds to the advertised submissions in relation to P33300 application for a Heritage Permit to *construct a new office tower on the northern part of the registered site, including demolition of the northern plaza, level three garden plaza, theatrette and part of the conference centre to 1 Spring Street (Shell House) and works to link the two buildings.*
- This submission is made outside the advertised notice period for consideration as a formal submission but instead is made one that may be considered under section 101(3)(b) of the Heritage Act (2017) - 'any other relevant matter.'
- At the time of this submission the National/Chapter President is Ms. Alice Hampson FRAIA¹ and the Victorian Chapter President is Mr. Bill Krotiris RAIA
- The Chief Executive Officer is Ms. Julia Cambage and the Victorian State Manager is Mr. Tim Leslie FRAIA.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The importance of good design.

The Australian Institute of Architects understands that the built environment shapes the places where we live, work and meet. It affects how spaces and places function and has the potential to stimulate the economy and enhance the environment.

Architecture influences all aspects of our built environment. It brings together the arts, environmental awareness, sciences and technology. By combining creative design with technical know-how, architects create physical environments, which in turn, influence our quality of life.

Almost all Australians (97%) believe that cities and towns are better to live in when public buildings and public spaces are well-designed. Likewise, almost all Australians (96%) are of the opinion that homes and apartments provide a better living experience when they are well-designed.

Quite simply, good design adds value.

The Australian Institute of Architects and its members are dedicated to raising the quality of the built environment for all and to the advancement of architecture. We seek to improve the health and well being of all who live and work in our diverse communities.

By raising design standards in our cities, urban areas, commercial and residential buildings, the profession as a whole alongside the Institute plays a major role in shaping Australia's future

1.2 Our submission on P33300.

The Australian Institute of Architects does not regularly submit objections in relation to projects, whether Heritage Listed or otherwise. We are highly aware of the complexity of constructing new projects in the Central Business District (CBD) whether on small infill site or on open plaza's once for public engagement, with the often conflicting priorities between the meaningful retention of our cultural fabric versus shaping the city to be the economic heart of the state with a high performing economy. This requires:

- making provision for increased population growth,
- sensible location and maximal use of civic infrastructure,
- attracting and retaining businesses
- creating high quality workplaces to attract various workforces

However, we submit that the proposal put forward under P33300 to construct a second tower at 1 Spring Street should not proceed as it would result in irreversible damage to a significant heritage place that actually helps define the high quality environment of Melbourne.

The significant adverse impact of the P33300 redevelopment proposal relies on an appreciation and understanding of the critical nature of modernist landscape space in tandem with actual built form.

1 Spring Street is one of only a small number of seminal commercial modernist buildings in Melbourne that need to be protected in such a way where both the building and the landscape need to be protected. They include the former ICI House, the former BHP House and this site – the former Shell House, at 1 Spring Street.

This award-winning project, the former Shell House at 1 Spring St. Melbourne, designed by the late Harry Seidler, is an exemplary architectural solution by one of Australia's most esteemed Architects. The building and its external landscape spaces deserves Victorian Government protection for future generations to enjoy.

1.3 The scope of this submission.

1 Spring Street received Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) registration on 29th June 2017. Consequent to its registration on the VHR, there are two questions that this submission answers below in opposing the proposal to construct a new tower over the building's Flinders Lane Plaza. These are:

- a) The extent to which the application, if approved, would affect the cultural heritage significance of the registered place or registered object;
- b) The extent to which the application, if refused, would affect the reasonable or economic use of the registered place or registered object, or cause undue financial hardship to the owner in relation to that place or object.

2 DETAILED RESPONSE

2.1 Response to question a) – impacts on the cultural heritage significance.

a) The extent to which the application, if approved, would affect the cultural heritage significance of the registered place or registered object;

2.1.1 Site and Built Form

When people speak about architecture, they often think of the actual built form as the element of creation, however, with many significant buildings it is their siting, their landscape, the public approach to the building, and the places of gathering and transit which are just as significant as the building itself. They are not separate elements but actually one holistic approach to an idea. The best examples of modernism integrate the site with the built form and 1 Spring Street is a key example of this holistic approach to architecture. It is perhaps the finest building of this period of late modernism in Melbourne and a project that has only grown in significance over the years following its completion.

2.1.2 Significance to Australian Institute of Architects – Architect and Project

Harry Seidler is considered one of Australia's most significant 20th Century architects. He was awarded a Life Fellow of the Australian Institute of Architects in 1970 and became a Gold Medallist in 1976, receiving the highest accolade the Institute can bestow on an Architect. Over his career he has received numerous awards and distinguished titles, including an Order of Australia and an Order of the British Empire. Harry Seidler's legacy has international recognition.

Shell House is a project that is recognised by the Australian Institute of Architects as being one of significance having won both State and National architecture awards. In 1991, Shell House received the Victorian Architecture Awards' 'Merit Award' for new commercial work, which at that time was the highest award in the category. This award has since been renamed the 'Sir Osborn McCutcheon Award for Commercial Architecture' after Sir Osborn who designed ICI House (1958) another modernist tower of significance. Shell House went on to receive the National RAI A award in the same year, alongside another Seidler tower in another state, illustrating the comprehensive and major contribution of Seidler during this period.

Shell House is the only commercial tower project by Harry Seidler in Melbourne. Critically, it is part of a set of four award winning seminal commercial towers and plazas that Seidler undertook during the peak of his career in the 1980s which included:

- Grosvenor Place, Sydney 1982-88 that won the 1991 Sir John Sulman Medal, RAI A
- Riverside Centre, Brisbane 1983-86 that won the 1987 Sir Zelman Cowan Award, 2011 Enduring State Architecture Award (QLD),
- Shell House, Melbourne 1985-89 that won the 1991 RAI A National Award, 1991 Commercial Architecture Award (Vic), and
- QV1, Perth 1987-91 that won the 1992 RAI A (WA) Architecture Design Award, the 1992 Commercial Architecture Award (WA), and received commendation for the 1992 Civic Design Award.

2.1.3 Seidler Commercial Tower DNA – Holistic Solutions

Each of the bespoke towers from this 1980s period share the same design philosophy and DNA:

1. a tower which comes to ground in an open formal/civic forecourt incorporating art,
2. a geometric tower, and
3. a public plaza open to the sky incorporating support functions for the commercial tower.

The tower is seen as a figurative object setback within a curated landscape setting. Seidler crucially provides public open space within the private title for these commercial projects – it is a clear and fundamental theoretical design position of Seidler.

Seidler's approach to buildings is holistic – the plazas and podium elements are as much a part of the design as the sculptural towers themselves. Studying the site plans

of Seidler's commercial projects of this period provides an understanding of the fundamental and significant importance of the public plaza, and its provision of public space within the private realm. The formal civic plazas are not for congregation, they are for civic address whilst the public plazas are setback, shaped and layered, like contours across the site. The public plazas are human scaled. Seidler speaks directly to the need to provide space for people within the city within the private realm that is open to the sky.

2.1.4 Heritage Impact Statement – The Missing Assessment of the Public Plaza

The Lovell Chen Heritage Impact statement presents a range of key items that are worth further analysis and critique in relation to understanding the proposal of building a new tower over the plaza of 1 Spring Street and the corresponding demolition of original heritage fabric. Particular reference should be made to the Heritage Council of Victoria stating that the management of 1 Spring Street should be holistic.

“No 1 Spring Street as a freestanding, three-dimensional tower with a principal orientation (address) to the south and east. Services are consolidated to the north elevation (Flinders Lane), which has a lesser articulation”. (p.14 Table, Physical expression of Design Principles, Lovell Chen)

This statement in the heritage impact statement could be misleading, suggesting that both the Northern façade is poorer due to having 'lesser' fenestration. This is not necessarily the case and the expressive stairs, and sculptural reading of the core as it sweeps across the Northern façade before meeting the primary fenestrated curve articulation of the office floor plate is also dramatic reading of this unique building floorplate.

The Physical Expression of Design Principles in the Heritage Impact Statement, includes in the assessment only two of the three major design elements of Seidler's commercial towers of this period as noted above. These are the formal plaza to street with the tower clearly coming to the ground and the sculptural geometric tower as form. However, the third major design elements, the informal, contoured plaza open to the sky, is omitted.

It is this third element, the informal plaza open to the sky and open to the public which is the element that is being removed and transformed into the lobby of a new commercial tower (tower 2). This is the space where the public come into direct contact with Seidler's curvaceous forms, the use of commercial touchpoints such as theatrettes, meeting rooms, and other signature support spaces. It provides outdoor areas for the public and tenants (upper podium) which has a human scale, which differs from the formal street entrance which is more about the civic gesture, the tower coming to ground, and the welcoming large scale artwork.

The proposition to demolish the podium and build over the public plaza is to misunderstand the total architectural approach of Seidler and to significantly detract and destroy a principle tenet of his design philosophy. It removes, forever, the ability to truly understand Shell Tower as one of Seidler's commercial quartet of towers, which other Australian States have wisely cherished.

Seidler writes about the importance of the open space around his buildings:

“Prevalent rules discourage limits to site coverage and, in fact, outlaw any towers which leave large portions of the ground level unbuilt... In our increasingly crowded cities the aim should be to create as much genuinely useful open space (open to the sky or glass covered) on private land as possible, places of repose and recreation. Such urban pedestrian spaces have been the delight of European cities for centuries.” (Planning and Architecture at the End of our Century, Harry Seidler)

Kenneth Frampton and Philip Drew, when describing Shell House and plaza and podium, state

“There is surely no other Seidler building in which the service and semi-public uses are so brilliantly integrated into the podium and its undercroft... testif(ying) to Seidler’s consummate skill as a planner” (Frampton, K; Drew, P. (1992) Harry Seidler. New York: Thames and Hudson, p. 98)

It is critical to understand that Seidler carefully considers the hierarchy of all spaces across the site, and painstakingly places all the infrastructure and back of house elements to Throssell Lane at the ground plane to ensure that Flinders Lane is completely open to public along its full length, creating a welcoming informal plaza with an identifiable address to the building and its conference facilities.

2.1.5 Underdevelopment or Design Intent

The discussion on the design merits of the new Tower 2 state that the site is underdeveloped and therefore a new tower is appropriate.

As outlined above, the heritage value and significance of the whole site, not just the tower, should lead to the understanding that no additional building should be constructed. Seidler’s statements on his frustration at planning laws that attempt to ‘outlaw any towers which leave large portions of the ground plane unbuilt’ clearly illustrate that Seidler would be against the proposal to build over the public plaza and that this ‘open to the sky’ plaza was a fundamental approach to his thinking.

Furthermore, his design for Shell house also clearly illustrates how Seidler envisaged the building’s interface with its neighbours – a stepped blade boundary wall, that follows a traditional street wall model and connects the site to its northern edge, Throssell Lane; and to its western edge, the Hotel Lindrum.

These strategic design moves clearly show how Seidler wanted total control of how his building was read in relation to its context – blinkering, holding the formal entry plaza within the broader Hoddle Grid between two scrolled blades walls. Whilst to Flinders Lane the plaza design embraces and engages the smaller heritage building Milton House and flows out to the street in a layered and engaging manner.

The site is purposefully designed to have a tower sitting amongst two plazas, it does not consider an additional tower and was not envisaged as an underdevelopment of the site, rather it was considered as an appropriate development of all of the site in a holistic vision.

2.1.6 Flinders Lane – Public Plaza and Touchpoint

The Flinders Lane plaza provides access to the auditorium and meeting and conference rooms that are a key feature of many iconic modernist buildings. The location of these spaces on Flinders Lane is of note, as it allows for large numbers of guests to enter and exit the theatre without the bottle neck issue of escalators or lifts. It provides an after-hours address and Flinders Lane forecourt allows for this space to operate independently from the main foyer.

In recent years there has been a resurgence of commercial buildings rebuilding theatrettes, training facilities, bookable meeting rooms, cafes, and other workplace support spaces to the foyers of their buildings. This can be seen through highly successful projects such as the Dexus Place model. The demolition of the theatrette, and other key workplace support spaces to the base of this building is a significant loss to the building's design vision. The theatrette is beautifully designed space that reinforces the design of the approach of the building. It also has a number of signature Seidler design elements such as the curvaceous battened ceiling that link it to other Seidler theatre/auditorium projects of this period.

The conference rooms' pinwheeling design around a central void, and the original water feature integrated into the design are key Seidler features. These touch-point spaces in commercial buildings were carefully considered, as they were integral parts of the design solution. Unlike the repetitious commercial floors, the lower bespoke podium levels of 1 Spring capture unique Seidler solutions and these are critical to remain intact as they are a key part in the understanding of the building.

Seidler was a holistic designer. The paving, landscape, layers, levels, materials, transitions were all part of the design solution. His designs encapsulated the external plazas, with materials blending between the two realms. Radiating tiles would connect the lower civic foyer to its external realm, whilst curvaceous walls would connect the podium to the outer public plaza.

2.1.7 Theatrette (original fabric)

“The single complete corporate facilities space to be removed in the process of constructing Tower 2 is the former Shell theatrette. The space is one of the group of quasi-public/corporate spaces which occupied the lower levels of the building. They are spaces which were particular to the Shell occupancy and in the absence of such a single corporate tenant are now of limited functional relevance.” P.23 Heritage Impact Statement, Lovell Chen

Contemporary office spaces, especially post Covid-19, are focused on providing tenants a mixture of key spaces which are not able to be provided for from a home environment. They are not predicated on an anchor or single corporate tenant. With concern about finding tenants for large commercial space in the CBD, increasingly owners are looking to install many of the tenant support elements, such as the theatrette of 1 Spring Street, into new and existing developments.

“The effect of derelict spaces on the perception and heritage value of the place overall cannot be discounted” (p.24 Heritage Impact Statement, Lovell Chen).

The theatrette has the opportunity to be of benefit to the building tenants if it is positioned in a way to allow for it be booked. The ability to blackout the space is of significant benefit as it would allow for the space to be used for video-conferencing and other emerging technologies, such as immersive telepresence. Beyond serving the building, the location of the theatrette allows for it to operate independently from the rest of the building allowing for future activation of the building if desired with Melbourne events (Comedy Festival, Open House Melbourne lecture, Melbourne Conversations).

In particular, the continuity of the theatrette would allow for smaller events, which often struggle to find suitable venues in the city, to thrive and could support additional trade for future food and beverage operations on the site, achievable through repurposing aspects of Milton House or Level 3 plaza or via a temporary pop up space within Flinders Lane plaza.

2.1.8 Upper and Lower Northern Plaza – Flinders Lane

The upper plaza to Flinders Lane is a unique opportunity for workplace activation and highly desirable in a Covid-era. These spaces have been left dormant when in reality they could easily be re-activated into being key draw cards of a contemporary and highly relevant design solution.

“The north plaza entry to 1 Spring Street from Flinders Lane has a more limited relationship to the architectural significance of the place than those from Spring Street and Flinders Street. The north plaza is an expression of one of the design principles (planning the total environment), being an outcome of Harry Seidler’s commitments to providing external threshold spaces to his buildings, and was delivered to a high material standard using details employed throughout the site’s external plazas (including the roof gardens and the western walkway). However, the north plaza is separated from the tower’s direct setback and landing, with no direct relationship with the presentation of the tower’s north elevation. The plaza’s functional contribution to the circulation sequence is its principal expression of the design principles; materially, the plaza was delivered within the holistic design of 1 Spring Street, but it is not a key element in the visual composition of the place.” (p.25 Heritage Impact Statement, Lovell Chen)

This critique, that the Northern Plaza is separated from the tower with no direct relationship with the tower, misunderstands this space. This space is purposefully designed to be layered and not have the tower come to ground. This approach is replicated in other towers of this time by Seidler such as in QV1 in Perth where the ‘informal’ podium element is set with a layered response back to the tower. These podium elements house the key tenant and public touch points discussed earlier and are set within the public plaza, which is on purpose different to the ‘civic’ main commercial entrance where the tower comes directly to ground.

“In responding to the loss of the northern plaza the mitigating action is that of reinterpreting the original design intent within the new development. The existing space is one which is little more than the back door access to the site, lacking amenity and in large part used by smokers and few others. The Level 3 podium landscaped area has from its inception failed to deliver a usable space because of access constraints and wind conditions. The new works incorporate a new

plaza space opening to Flinders Lane which directly references the existing plaza, but delivers a space of far higher amenity. The Level 3 landscape, albeit now to be within an enclosed space, further responds in incorporating planting and seating reflective of the original design. The design response is one which draws on the original form and function of these spaces as providing a setting for the original tower, while also providing a new urban landscape context for the new tower.” (p.26 Heritage Impact Statement, Lovell Chen)

The existing space is not a back-door access to the site, it is the critical third part of the Seidler design strategy for commercial buildings as discussed earlier: 1 – civic plaza address, 2- geometric tower, 3 – contoured public plaza. The reason this plaza is not active is that all the functions that should be operating in this area are simply not being used.

The upper plaza could be activated by encouraging engagement with this space through a design review of the interiors that interface with this space. The lower plaza is a forecourt to the theatrette and conference/meeting rooms which, again, would use this space if they were being utilised.

It is clear in commercial trends on workplace that these touchpoints for staff are key attractors for tenants and are being designed in new generation workplaces. This project has these support spaces already embedded in the design and is part of what makes this such a significant architectural project. The outdoor plaza, which is north facing and open to the sky, could be highly successful if given focused design and programme consideration. There are opportunities for Milton House to include food and beverage offerings, which with modification to the building (some of which are already proposed) could flow out to an outdoor space, creating a unique opportunity within the city for outdoor dining with desirable orientation.

A similar approach has occurred with former ICI house 1958, with the upper floor being returned to a café and discussions underway about re-opening the roof terrace. ICI’s landscape plaza has been replanted and the ground floor café (not original) has been reworked and integrated into its landscape rather than separated from it. The lift cars were refurbished in 2016 to be more in alignment with the original concept rather than the 1980s post-modern refresh.

These works have strived to align this building back to its original 1950s key design drivers and has been a great success in attracting and retaining tenants in this building which clearly illustrates a holistic design approach like 1 Spring Street.

2.1.9 In the Round – A Sculptural Tower

There is no doubt that the insertion of Tower 2 removes the opportunity to fully understand Tower 1 as building in the round, which was its design intent. Seidler’s tower does not have a back, as alluded to, it is considered in a holistic manner to all facades. Seidler was interested in solar protection in his buildings, using sunshades on his buildings at a time when this was not common practice. The core to the Northern face of the tower form reduces heat load to the tower, a strategy also employed by ICI House, as well as addressing practical issues in relation to site utilisation. The absence of fenestration does not correlate to ‘a less sensitivity’ and can often be used to create a stronger compositional reading of a building as outlined earlier.

The outcome was a building which did not pursue the full development of the site, as demonstrated in the 1985 Design Report (refer s.2.10 of CMP)' Lovell Chen HIS p.27 (p.31 of pdf)

'The placement of the new tower will constrain views to 1 Spring Street from the north but this is not an outcome which will diminish its significance' (p.27 Heritage Impact Statement, Lovell Chen)

This statement is fundamentally incorrect, as the new tower will, without doubt, diminish the building's significance. As outlined above, the new tower will result in the loss of the urban public plaza open to the sky, the loss of the reading of the sinuous geometric form and expressed stairs from the Street, the loss of the theatre for both private and public use and, critically, the loss of the original design intent.

2.1.10 Pocket Park

In the future, once adjacent buildings are completed, this Northern façade and 'pocket park' will be even more significant and illustrates Seidler's forward thinking of how the city will develop around the site. It is ironic, given the rigorous battle Seidler had with the City of Melbourne in the 1980s in relation to setting this building back from the street edge and in creating a public plaza within the site. The City of Melbourne's Design Guide actually encourages a range of initiatives embedded in this project including:

- prioritising open to sky connections wherever possible (obviously building over the plaza would negate this principle),
- ensuring pedestrian connections are of a high quality, and
- retaining and refurbishing existing plazas in new developments.

2.1.11 Expert Analysis – What Question are they Answering?

It appears that many of the experts that have provided comment on this project appear to be responding to 'if' a tower 'was' built over the plaza how might this be done, rather than responding to the more difficult question of 'should' a tower be built over the plaza.

This, of course, avoids the critical heritage question of whether this proposal should be allowed and if it is in the best interest for the city and people of Victoria.

The Office of the Victorian Government Architect's series of questions are responses to how a design should respond to building over the plaza – however they do not state that a tower should be built over the plaza.

Philip Goad responds to the design of the proposed tower. However, again, he does not comment that this is a desired outcome in relation to Seidler vision and from a heritage standpoint.

Greg Holman from Seidler's office endorses the design but doesn't state that this would be something that Seidler would have supported or is the correct outcome for site in a heritage context, rather he responds to the 'interface' between the new tower

and the old. This again is not the question at hand, on whether a tower should be built, but a secondary question on if a tower was built how it should interface.

It is irrelevant whether any Architect, no matter how respected, supports the new design outcome as this is not the actual question that should be asked. Instead the question that should be asked directly is whether they think that a new tower being built over the public plaza of Seidler's award winning project is the best outcome for this site in relation to its heritage legacy to the State of Victoria.

It is the Australian Institute of Architects' opinion that, irrespective of the quality of the design outcome being proposed, no significant modification to this heritage listed project is appropriate.

2.2 Response to question b) – impacts to reasonable or economic use.

b) The extent to which the application, if refused, would affect the reasonable or economic use of the registered place or registered object, or cause undue financial hardship to the owner in relation to that place or object.

“In the normal course of maintaining an office asset, there is a point where it reaches the end of its lifecycle. Rather than maintaining it in a situation where rents are declining reflecting an inferior offer relative to new competition, these assets are redeveloped for the highest and best use at the time”

“With the heritage listing applying to Tower 1, redevelopment is not open to the owner. Therefore the level of income generated needs to exceed what the building itself can generate to ensure that the asset can be maintained to a standard where it is competitive with new/contemporary office stock, while at the same time preserving recognised heritage elements.” (Urbis Response, p11. Janet Sullivan letter, Lovell Chen – Maintenance Cost and Additional Income)

2.2.1 The Value of Authenticity

Signature buildings which were leading commercial projects for their time, such as the former ICI House, now Orica building (1958) is now considered B Grade office and is 100% leased). The former BHP House at 140 William St. (1972) is now considered A Grade office. They both remain highly sought after addresses as they are signature architectural solutions that create their own brand that tenants seek to align with. A current review of the websites of Seidler's buildings across the country (eg Grosvenor Place², QV1³ also demonstrates the importance of Seidler's architectural legacy that underpins the market strength of these buildings so that they continue to attract tenants.

It could be equally argued that it is even more important that the building is maintained in its current format for it to have long term attraction to future tenants who are seeking

² See: <https://www.grosvenorplacesydney.com.au/>

³ See: <https://qv1.com.au/>

a pre-eminent signature building which an additional tower would otherwise most likely both compromise and lead to decreasing rents for Tower 1.

The open plaza, dedicated tenant facilities (theatrette, etc) and views from the North from Tower 1 over the plaza are all benefits to the existing building not detrimental liabilities in the way they have been either portayed, marginally considered or absented from the appraisals. The loss of the signature elements that makes this a holistic and pure 'Seidler Design' and the inherent amenity features of the plaza, conference / meeting rooms and theatrette could foreseeably devalue the Tower 1 asset.

2.2.2 Maintenance

When purchasing any building, it would be fair to assume that due diligence is undertaken to understand the ongoing maintenance costs of the asset in relation to the income. It would be wrong to assume that all buildings required additional developments to ensure the viability of the original asset as they age. The heritage listed 1958 ICI House (considered Australia's first skyscraper) does not require an additional tower to be built over its open lawn space, which is critical to its design philosophy, to continue to be a viable commercial proposition.

2.2.3 Underutilisation

"We advised that the theatrette has been largely unused since Shell vacated 1 Spring Street. A lack of commercial or tenant demand for this space has seen it only used sparingly in recent years, for sporadic internal presentations or training sessions. The space is very difficult to adapt to support other uses due to the structural configuration and speciality theatrette configuration" (p12. Janet Sullivan letter, Lovell Chen – Theatrette)

There can be many reasons why the theatrette has not been currently utilised by tenants. There may be no easily accessible digital booking system, there may be costs associated with its use or a myriad of other reasons. However, this by itself does not mean that theatrette is obsolete. Rather, the opposite is the situation as theatrettes continue to be designed into new buildings. A recent example is the auditorium for Australian Unity in their new CBD building on Spring Street.

The current commercial workplace environment is seeking to integrate specialised support spaces as these are critical as points of difference to attract and retain tenants. This trend can be seen with the rise of workplace projects such as Dexu Place, We Work, and Hub which provide a range of amenities for workers whether for the anchor tenants or as flexible co-workspaces for smaller operations.

2.2.4 Wind

"This characterisation is in part supported by an Environmental Wind Speed Measurement report using wind tunnel modelling prepared by MEL Consultants in November 2020. The report found that existing wind conditions in one of the testing locations in the plaza exceeded "comfortable" levels for sitting. In each of three testing locations in the plaza, the proposed conditions were assessed as an improvement from existing conditions for at least one of sitting, standing, and walking criteria. For two testing sites, all three wind comfort criteria were improved by the proposal." (p12. Janet Sullivan letter, Lovell Chen – Level 3 Wind)

While wind issues are faced by the majority of buildings in the CBD and Docklands, these conditions are not prevalent all of the time and depend on wind direction and velocity. There can be a range of interventions that could be undertaken by the owner to minimise wind to level 3 apart from building a new tower to solve this issue.

It is worth noting that, in many instances, the wind will not be from a problematic direction or at problematic velocity meaning that the level 3 plaza could be well within the 'comfortable' range / long term stationary / sitting condition in its current unaltered state for the vast majority of the time. Moreover, this is a North facing space which is not the predominant wind direction in Melbourne.

2.2.5 Level 3 Functionality

“Observation of the plaza confirms that use of the space for outdoor amenity is, and has always been, non-functional. The Level 3 plaza has from opening been a gated, controlled access area. Access to the Level 3 concourse from Flinders Lane has a gate at the bottom of the stairs, and via the western laneway fire stair. Both accesses have remained locked due to limited passive surveillance of the space and to prevent criminal activity. As such, tenant and public access to this space has not been available.”

This is partially an operational issue, as well as a programmatic issue. There are contemporary raised plazas with activation that work exceptionally well, such as Movida Aqui at the rear of 500 Bourke Street commercial tower which utilises an outdoor podium element to great effect.

The programme of Level 3 is critical to the success of the level 3 terrace. This space could be activated with a considered approach which could be either private or public use. A workplace strategy or a food and beverage strategy alongside a lighting, landscape and wind strategy could be adopted to further attract people to this space.

The hours of operation for the space could also be controlled with the stairs and space being locked after working hours to deal with perceived criminal behaviour, rather than the current approach which is that the space is always locked from the public realm thereby leading to its lack of use.

Alternatively level 3 could be activated to attract tenants to this floor and to the North facing terrace, which provides much needed worker amenity and retain its exclusive use to tenants.

2.2.6 COVID Safe Spaces

COVID19 has highlighted the importance of outdoor spaces with access to open air and sunlight as a key commodity for commercial projects. In tandem, wellbeing practices such as WELLS, are encouraging new commercial developments to incorporate landscape and external spaces for tenants. These ideas are already intrinsic to the Seidler design.

END