

Melbourne Open House 2009

Fact Sheet

Treasury Reserve is a triangle of land on the eastern fringe of the central business district of Melbourne and lies on the border of Treasury Gardens with the Fitzroy Gardens to the east. Its position close to Parliament House makes it suitable as an administrative centre for the Victorian government.

The first three buildings erected on the Treasury Reserve – Old Printer's Office, Old Treasury Building, 2 Treasury Place – have their origins in the 1850s and their constructions were made possible by the prosperity enjoyed by Victoria as a result of the gold discoveries of the 1850s.

In 1999, a Committee of Management was appointed to administer regulations for Treasury Reserve. The Committee operates in conjunction with, and uses the resources of, the Victorian Government Services Group, Department of Treasury and Finance.

1 Treasury Place

Prior to the construction of this building, the land was a paddock that was used by a caretaker who lived in the Old Treasury Building. In 1962 an architectural competition was held, with 12 firms experienced in office building invited to submit design plans for this section of Treasury Reserve. The guidelines for the competition outlined the government's wish for a building or buildings that would express 'soaring wonderment'. Yuncken Freeman Architects entered the competition, but felt that a tower-like construction would destroy Melbourne's best vista looking eastward from the top of Collins Street. Barry Patten's design, from Yuncken Freeman Architects was initially rejected as it didn't address the specifications, but was eventually selected and included two infill buildings of similar scale to the Old Treasury building and 2 Treasury Place, with the taller building to face Macarthur Street.

Initially known as the State Public Offices, this building, along with the two others we will see later, is architecturally important as a unique modernist 'urban ensemble'. The design is uncompromisingly modern and severe, yet was designed to fit in with the surrounding historic buildings. The masonry construction, small classically proportioned window openings and location of the tower to one side (1 Macarthur Street) of the Old Treasury was an unusually sensitive response to the urban context. All three buildings are important for their innovative use of pre-cast paneling incorporated as load bearing elements.

The construction of the three buildings was completed by 1970, with the intention of housing the Department of Premier, the Premier's Office, the Cabinet Room and other Government offices.

In 1970, this building was 'Building of the Year', awarded by the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, and Yuncken Freeman Architects was one of the most highly regarded firms of their time.

Current use

This building currently houses the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Department of Treasury and Finance as well as ministerial offices of the Premier, Treasurer and Deputy Premier.

2 Treasury Place

In 1859 the foundations were laid for another building to house Treasury officials other than Old Treasury Building, but construction did not proceed at the time.

In 1873, an architectural competition was held to complete public offices on this site and this was won by Melbourne architect, Michael Egan. Born in Dublin in 1846, Egan migrated to Australia in 1850 with his parents, was educated in Melbourne and by 1862 he was a leading Melbourne architect. Egan's design for the new Government Offices was much criticised and was judged to be 'of a plain character'. The founders of Melbourne felt the need for strong, lavish

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architectural design. Egan revised his plans and redesigned the elevations. The modified plan added external ornamentation, which included decorative mouldings and cornices, marking the division between each floor and pairs of columns on the central portion of the structure. A coat of arms was placed over the central Doric portico and elegant cast iron boot scrapers were placed at each entrance.

The building was planned as the home for most of the Government departments and the headquarters of the public administration of Victoria. When the offices were finally completed in 1877, the Treasurer and his officers moved there. 2 Treasury Place was known by several names, including 'New Treasury', 'Government Offices' or 'Public Offices'. From 1912, it was referred to as 'State Offices' to distinguish it from the Commonwealth Offices built at 4 Treasury Place.

During this time, luncheon rooms, kitchen and scullery were located on the third floor to provide meals for the public servants. Ministers were located on the first floor, with the Public Works Department on the ground floor of the east wing. A grand staircase from the large entrance hall led to the Lands Court on the first floor. A third floor was added to east and west wings in 1933 in a major remodelling of the building to the design of Oakley and Parkes. The staircase was then removed to allow the installation of a central lift. Changes were made to the Premier's suite and Cabinet Room on the first floor in 1936, and a new lift was installed for the private use of the Premier. These changes took place under the supervision of the Public Works Department Chief Architect, Percy Everett. The western annexe, an extension to the north of west wing was added in 1949 by the Public Works Department to an Everett design, but this was later demolished in 1997. The Premier and Cabinet were located in this building until 1 Treasury was completed.

2 Treasury Place is an exceptional example of Renaissance Revival architecture derived from the neo-classical pavilion form, which was designed to suit Old Treasury Building. The exterior surface is decorated with beautifully proportioned mouldings and the loggia is surmounted with the State coat of arms.

The 1997-98 refurbishment of 2 Treasury Place saw the removal of the 1930s central lift and the reinstatement of the grand stairway to the first floor. The main heritage areas on the ground and first floors have returned to their original state. The western annexe was demolished and the original façade of the north end of the west wing was reinstated.

In 1998, Peter Elliot Pty Ltd, won an Award for Merit for Institutional Alterations and Extension as well as the John George Knight Award for building conservation.

Current use

2 Treasury Place is currently used by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, with the Ministers' offices located on the first floor in each of the building's wings.

3 Treasury Place

George Watson designed the building in 1906. 3 Treasury Place housed the Department of Agriculture, the first government department apart from the Treasury to have its own named building. Watson, who worked for the Public Works Department, used the Queen Anne and French Second Empire styles and continued the classical theme for the Agriculture offices with a building in the Rundbognestil (Round-arch style) in line with the palazzo design at 2 Treasury Place and Old Treasury Building. By reviving the Round-arch style, he was responsible for a clever development of the neo-Palladian revival, and his extension of the building in 1907 did not depart from his original design.

George William Watson (1850 – 1915) was born and educated in England, joining the Public Works Department soon after his arrival in Victoria in October 1872. He was promoted to Chief Architect of the Public Works Department in 1910.

In 1936, the building was remodelled, with the second and third floors set aside for inspectors, research and clerical staff. At this time, each agricultural sector – wool, tobacco, poultry and the potato – was given their own space.

Percy Everett, who was Chief Architect of the Public Works Department at the time, designed the 1948 extension of the building. It included premises for the photography, films and radio units and a cinema for the Department. Both the

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Department of Agriculture and Department of Education were actively involved in agricultural education via film and radio. Prior to the advent of television and other new media, film and radio were essential methods of informing and educating farmers throughout the state. The cinema was used by the State Film Centre until 1977 when the Department of Agriculture moved to new premises on Wellington Parade.

The building's use changed in response to developments in modern communications. It was used as a distribution centre of educational videos and the cinema was used for screening to school groups and other community audiences. The rest of the building was used by agricultural advisers and inspectors in the fields of livestock production, herd testing, dairy, husbandry, cereal, maize etc. A scientific and technical library was located on the third floor. The 1948 extension was later demolished in 1998.

Current use

This building is currently used by the State Services Authority and the Victorian Multicultural Commission and both are agencies under the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

4 Treasury Place

In 1911 Victoria provided land on the Reserve for a place for Commonwealth politicians and officials to work. The Commonwealth Offices were undertaken in two stages. The first stage, in 1912, faced the Treasury Gardens and the second, in 1914, is the curved wing at the rear facing St Andrews Place. The building was framed in reinforced concrete for fire protection, with brick walls finished with render on the exterior. At the time, the concrete construction was important for the storage of gold reserves and bank notes in the basement vault.

The design of the five-storeyed building has been attributed to the first Commonwealth architect, J. S. Murdoch. Born in Scotland in 1862 and trained as an architect in Edinburgh, Murdoch was a senior clerk in the Public Works Branch in the Home Affairs department at the time of this design. He later became Chief Architect of the Department of Works and Railways. Murdoch was responsible for the design and construction many early Canberra buildings, including the provisional Parliament House.

4 Treasury Place is significant as it is the first place built to house Commonwealth public servants and the Prime Minister. It is an early and accomplished example of the English Baroque Revival. 4 Treasury Place was sympathetically scaled and detailed to complement the earlier buildings on the Reserve.

Current use

The Commonwealth Offices are currently used by Ministers and other visiting members of the government as well as providing office accommodation for the present Governor-General when she is in Melbourne.

23 St Andrews Place

Previously known as 2A Treasury Place, this building was constructed in 1873-75 to accommodate the Central Plan Office which housed Victorians survey plans. It was also used as a paper store for the Government Printer at 41 St Andrews Place.

The building was provided with fireproof shutters to the Plan Room vault, which closed at night by the single automotive action of an archimedian-type screw. The Central Plan Office of the Department of Crown Lands and Survey occupied the original strong room with its cast iron pillars, concrete vaulting and iron shutters for more than one hundred years. The original strong room had two floors added in 1900 and was extended to the west in 1943. A three-storey flat-roofed wing replacing the original 1874 dark rooms and workrooms to the north of the strong room was added in 1945. The 1945 extension was demolished in 1997 during the refurbishment to 2 Treasury Place.

Current use

This building is currently in use by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

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41 St Andrews Place

The former Government Printer's office is important for its simple, neo-classically derived pavilion form, which set the scene for the future buildings on the Reserve. It was the first building on Treasury Reserve (even before Old Treasury building). The decision to include the Printer's Office on Treasury Reserve reflected the importance of communications in the newly formed colony of Victoria, which was separated from New South Wales in 1851. The Government Printer was responsible for the printing needs of an emerging state. To support Parliament, the bills, acts and all the reports and other official parliamentary papers had to be printed. The skills of the Victorian Government Printer's Office were essential to the new Commonwealth government, formed in 1901, with all Commonwealth publications printed in this building. A separate printing office in Canberra was not set up until 1927.

The printing of admission tickets for the Olympic Games in 1956 was one of the last major projects carried out in this building by the Government Printer almost 100 years after it was built. At the time the head Government Printer was required to live on the premises. The Government Printer's Office opened in January 1851 in Lonsdale Street, but moved to Treasury Reserve when construction was completed in 1858, and the Government Printer's residence was added at the south end in 1861. The building was designed by J.J. Clark, with construction beginning in 1856. Following its construction the Government Printer's Office was extended several times in 1870. A fire on 24 May 1882 necessitated restoration works and some additions. Some of the functions of the Printing Office moved to the exhibition buildings during restoration works. Some of the undamaged rooms of the Printer's Office were occupied by the military until repair works began. You can see some of the original building work that was purposefully included in the renovated designs.

Note: You may notice some tramway tracks to the main Government Printer's Office. These were used until 1913 when linotype machines were first installed in the former electric engine house (no longer exists). The linotype set was loaded on small trucks and pulled by young apprentices along the tramway tracks.

Current use

The building is currently being used by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development – the Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority and the International Students sector.

41A St Andrews Place

This section of the Printing Office was reserved for the head Government Printer as he was required to live on the premises. The first Government Printer was John Ferres, who migrated to Melbourne from England in 1848. He began his duties in 1851 after a brief stint working at the Melbourne *Herald*, but did not live on site until after 1861. The last official to live in the residence was Robert Brain, who had succeeded his uncle, John Ferres, in 1887. The residence quarters were later converted into offices, with original fireplaces still intact.

Current use

The building is currently being used by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development – the Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority and the International Students sector.

33 St Andrews Place

This building was included in the 1887-1888 building contract for 41 St Andrews Street Place after a fire in the Printer's Office on 24 May 1882 necessitated restoration works and some additions. It became known as the New Government Printing Office. The mannerist style of the new additions was carried through to 1887 by Public Works Department architects J.H. Marsden and G.B.A. Austin, with taller windows allowing more light to the work spaces within. The mannerist style in architecture (c.1520–1600) originated in Italy and was manifested in the use of unbalanced proportions and arbitrary arrangements of decorative features, used to complement the other styles of the buildings.

Current use

The building is currently being used by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

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55 St Andrews Place and 1 Macarthur Street

These two buildings, along with No.1 Treasury Place, were part of Barry Patten's design for the area in 1962, forming the unique modernist 'urban ensemble'. As mentioned earlier, the design is modern and severe and architecturally contrasts with the surrounding historic buildings. 1 Macarthur Street is the taller 'tower-like' building, while 55 St Andrews Place is the low-rise building. The former Treasury Theatre is now used by both the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Department of Treasury and Finance. Like No.1 Treasury Place, masonry construction, small classically proportioned window openings are key features of these buildings. The construction of all three buildings was completed by 1970, with the intention of housing the Department of Premier, the Premier's Office, the Cabinet Room and other Government Offices.

Current use

1 Macarthur Street currently houses the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Treasury and Finance as well as ministerial offices. 55 St Andrews Street currently houses parliamentary services and committees.

Source: *The Treasury Reserve*, published by Heritage Victoria, Department of Infrastructure, Melbourne, 2000.