



Circa 1938, Former Hoyts Cinema, Richmond



Present façade

**Amendment C245 (City of Yarra)**  
 311-317 Bridge Road, Richmond – Panel Report

Expert Witness Statement - Heritage

April 2020

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 Purpose

This report is a heritage expert witness statement for the Planning Panel appointed to consider matters relating to Amendment C245 to the City of Yarra Planning Scheme associated with the 'Thematic Study of Theatres in the City of Yarra (2017) – Stage 2 Report' prepared by Context Pty Ltd. It has been prepared by Principal Architect Roger Beeston, with the assistance of Anthony Hemingway, Architectural Historian and Ashleigh Ngan, Architectural Graduate on behalf of the Richmond Church Lands Trust and concerns the property at 311-317 Bridge Road, Richmond.

### **Thematic Study of Theatres in the City of Yarra (2017)**

The Thematic Study of Theatres in the City of Yarra (2017) was commissioned by the City of Yarra to identify known and existing theatres in the City. A key objective was to prepare recommendations for the protection of any places deemed to meet the threshold of a Heritage Overlay and to recommend internal controls where appropriate.<sup>1</sup> Three places were identified by Context as warranting the application of these controls due to their level of intactness.

- Richmond Cinema (former) 311-317 Bridge Road, Richmond (subject site)
- Austral Theatre (former), 200-202 Johnston Street, Fitzroy
- Burnley Theatre (former), 365 Swan Street, Richmond

A fourth cinema, the Jubilee Pictures/Adelphi Cinema (former) at 361-35 Nicholson Street, Carlton North was initially identified to possibly have a highly intact interior but could not be confirmed as the contemporary fit-out of soft furnishings was obscuring any underlying solid' fabric. Context confirmed that it 'did not have sufficient interior integrity to warrant a separate control from that of its precinct.'

### **Amendment C245**

Amendment C245 – Heritage Overlay and Zone Fix Up, proposes to correct heritage overlay zone anomalies and errors in the Yarra Planning Scheme.<sup>2</sup> This amendment would also implement the recommendations identified in the Thematic Study of Theatres in the City of Yarra.

The amendment would remove the southern part of the subject site from precinct overlay HO310 and introduce an individual heritage overlay (HO504) to the entire site as 311-317 Bridge Road (Richmond Cinema, former part rear, later Hoyts (now Showroom), former Crystal Palace Skating Rink), including internal controls.<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of this report is to review the heritage significance of the site and whether it warrants inclusion in an individual heritage overlay, including internal controls.

An external and internal inspection of the subject site was undertaken on 30 March 2020.

## 1.2 Location

311-317 Bridge Road, Richmond is located on the north side of Bridge Road, close to the intersection of Church Street.

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<sup>1</sup> Thematic Study of Theatres in the City of Yarra (2017) – Stage 2 Report, 26 September 2017, p(iv)

<sup>2</sup> Yarra City Council

<sup>3</sup> The amendment would remove the Austral Theatre (former) from precinct overlay (HO304) and introduce an individual heritage overlay, including internal controls. The Burnley Theatre (former) would have internal controls added to its extant individual heritage overlay listing (HO286).



Aerial, with approximate boundaries of subject site indicated  
(Source: Nearmap, March 2020)

### 1.3 Yarra Planning Scheme

The southern part of 311-317 Bridge Road, Richmond is included within HO310 Bridge Road Precinct, in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay in the *Yarra Planning Scheme*.

Directly east of the subject site is the Richmond Police Station at 319-323 Bridge Road, which is protected by an individual heritage overlay (HO230), without internal controls. Adjacent to this, is the Richmond Municipal Offices & City Hall, former court house, at 325-333 Bridge Road which is included within the Bridge Road Precinct.



Heritage Overlay Map No 06HO with the subject site (blue outline) and precinct boundary (HO310) (dashed red). The Richmond Police Station (yellow arrow) and Town Hall (blue arrow) are indicated.  
(Source: Planning Schemes Online)

The Statement of Significance for the HO310 Bridge Road Precinct, which derives from the City of Yarra Review of Heritage Overlay Areas (Graeme Butler + Associates 2007) is attached as an Appendix.

The subject site is currently graded 'contributory' within the Precinct.<sup>4</sup> Contributory places are defined in Clause 22.04:

The place is a contributory element within a larger heritage place. A contributory element could include a building, building groups and works, as well as building or landscape parts such as chimneys, verandahs, wall openings, rooflines and paving.

#### Other Listings

The subject site is not listed on the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) or the Register of the National Estate (RNE), nor has it been classified by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria).

<sup>4</sup> City of Yarra Review of Heritage Overlay Areas (Graeme Butler + Associates 2007) Appendix 8

## 1.4 Methodology

The methodology adopted in reviewing the cultural significance is in accordance with the processes and criteria outlined in the *Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance*, known as the *Burra Charter* (Australia ICOMOS, 2013) and *Applying the Heritage Overlay, Planning Practice Note 1, August 2018*. In preparing this report, I have undertaken the following:

- A site inspection of the exterior and interior of the extant building.
- Review of background documents including:
  - Council Meeting Minutes and Reports dated 13 November 2018, 18 September 2018 and 26 November 2019.
  - Submissions to Amendment C245.
  - Exhibition Documents to Amendment C245.
  - Planning Panels Victoria Directions Letter dated 28 February and 6 April.
- Review of the background studies and citations relevant heritage studies including:
  - The Thematic Study of Theatres in the City of Yarra (2017)
  - Victoria Street and Bridge Road Built Form Review Heritage Assessments, GJM Heritage (2018)
  - Yarra High Streets Statements of Significance (October 2017, updated November 2019)
- Historical research including:
  - Numerous newspaper articles available on Trove online (historical newspapers).
  - Historical photographs in the collections of the State Library of Victoria, Cinema and Theatre Database.
  - Historic aerials via Landata online.
  - Property Sewerage Plans (City West Water).
- An assessment of the development of the site.
- A design and comparative analysis.
- An assessment of the possible heritage significance of the site and whether it warrants inclusion in an individual heritage overlay, including internal controls.

## 1.5 Expert Witness Background

My full name is Roger Baley Beeston. I hold a Bachelor of Architecture degree from Melbourne University and am a registered architect in the State of Victoria. I have practised as an architect since 1985 and for most of that time specialised as a conservation/heritage architect. I established the architectural practice, RBA Architects and Conservation Consultants Pty Ltd in 1994 after seven years as senior architect at Allom Lovell & Associates. The practice is located at 4C/171 Fitzroy Street, St Kilda.

RBA Architects and Conservation Consultants specialise in the assessment, restoration and sensitive adaptation of buildings and places of heritage significance. The practice is recognised for our conservation work by Heritage Victoria, the peak heritage body in the State, and also the AIA (we have thrice won the prestigious John George Knight Heritage Award). We have undertaken a wide variety of heritage assessment and conservation work throughout Victoria for various State and local government agencies, as well as for private individuals, organisations and corporations (details of our projects can be found on our webpage (<http://www.rbaarchitects.com.au/>)).

As a practice, we have experience of assessing a wide range of building types and architectural styles. Among the larger assessment projects, we have prepared the heritage studies for the shires of Strathbogie and Towong. In addition, we have undertaken various heritage reviews including: City North Heritage Review (for the City of Melbourne) and French Island Heritage Review. As a practice, we are well versed in statutory heritage protection at the local, State and Federal levels, and have been asked to comment on many occasions on the suitability of proposed change at places of heritage significance.

As an expert witness on matters related to places of cultural heritage significance (from the local to the State level), I have appeared before the Heritage Council of Victoria, Planning Panels Victoria, the Supreme Court, and VCAT. Since late 2010, I have also been acting as a Heritage Advisor for the City of Melbourne.

Currently I am the Deputy Chairman of AusHeritage (Australia's Export Network for Cultural Heritage Services). I undertake intermittent teaching roles and I am former a member of the Academic Advisory Board at Deakin University in the Cultural Heritage and Museum Studies courses. In addition, I am a member of Australia ICOMOS, The National Trust of Australia (Victoria), and the Society of Architectural Historians of Australia and New Zealand (SAHANZ).

In the preparation of this report, I have made all inquiries that I believe are desirable and appropriate, and no matters of significance, which I regard as relevant, to my knowledge have been withheld from the Panel.

April 2020



## 2 HISTORY

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### 2.1 Introduction

This section provides a brief summary of the history of roller skating and cinema development in Melbourne as a means of contextualising the development of the subject site. It provides an overview of the four main phases of development of the subject site which can be summarised as below:

- Phase 1: The site was established as a roller skating rink, (1888 – 1916).
- Phase 2: The roller skating rink was converted to a cinema, (1916 – 1926).
- Phase 3: The site was redeveloped as a theatre, (Hoyts Richmond Cinema) (1926 – circa 1960).
- Phase 4: Post Cinema Phase, (circa 1960 – present).

It is important to note that the terms 'cinema' and 'theatre' were used interchangeably in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1900-1930) and the architects of one were typically the architects of the other.<sup>5</sup> Characteristic of the theatre was the proscenium arch (an ornate 'frame' surrounding the stage) and the area beyond. However, many city cinemas incorporated stages for live performances, and theatres could easily accommodate 'the shadowed image,' between their house tabs.<sup>6</sup>

### 2.2 Contextual

#### Roller Skating Rinks in Melbourne

Roller skating was a popular recreational activity and form of exercise in Melbourne from the 1880s -1910s and was adapted from the American past time of ice skating. The invention of the roller skate is credited to Mr Plimpton of New York while the introduction of roller skating to Melbourne is credited to Mr George Coppin (1819-1906).<sup>7</sup>

Coppin was a comic actor and one of Australia's most influential theatrical entrepreneurs, establishing many of Melbourne's earliest theatres. In 1855 he built the Olympic Theatre (now demolished) on the corner of Exhibition and Lonsdale Streets, and the Theatre Royal on Bourke Street. In 1862 he established the Haymarket Theatre and Apollo Hall, on Bourke Street and in 1886, roller skating was introduced at the Apollo Hall. The venue was soon 'rushed by crowds eager to revive the old sensations, to encounter new ones.'<sup>8</sup>

In 1904 'The Glaciarium,' the first ice skating rink to be built outside of the northern hemisphere, was opened in Adelaide by H Newman Reid, General Manager.<sup>9</sup> Two years later the first 'Glaciarium' was opened in Melbourne at Prince's Bridge, prompting the popularity of roller skating as a recreational activity.<sup>10</sup> Roller skating rinks were established in towns and suburbs across Melbourne and events such as fancy-dress roller-skating carnivals and roller polo matches were held.<sup>11</sup>

The typical building or structure of the rink was fairly rudimentary. The roof structure usually had a generous span, forming a large open space. The form and design of the building was relatively 'shed-like' meaning they were flexible spaces that could be easily adapted. While typically covered, the skating rink could also be an open-air structure.

The popularity of roller skating declined during the 1910-1920s in favour of new forms of entertainment, such as moving pictures. It was common for skating rinks to be 'converted' into cinemas to accommodate this growing trend. One such example is the former Jubilee Roller Skating Rink (now the San Remo Ballroom) at 367 Nicholson Street which was

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<sup>5</sup> Ross Thorne, 'Picture Palace, Architecture in Australia,' Sun Books, 1976, p3-10. This section primarily derives from this entry.

<sup>6</sup> The part of the stage in front of the proscenium arch, above the orchestra pit. This area is also known as the 'forestage.' ([www.theatrecrafts.com/pages/home/topics/beginners/glossary/](http://www.theatrecrafts.com/pages/home/topics/beginners/glossary/), accessed 11 April 2020)

<sup>7</sup> 'The Skating Rink' *Argus*, 8 June 1866, p5

<sup>8</sup> Australian Variety Theatre Archive • <https://ozvta.com/theatres-vic/>, accessed 10 April 2020

<sup>9</sup> 'Glaciarium. Ice Palace Skating Rink,' *The Advertiser*, Adelaide, 14 October 1904, p2

<sup>10</sup> 'Skating on Real Ice,' *Punch*, 24 May 1906, p33

<sup>11</sup> 'Richmond Skating Rink,' *Punch*, 23 July 1908, p32

converted into to the Jubilee Picture Theatre in 1912 and further enlarged in 1922.<sup>12</sup>

### Cinema Development in Melbourne

The earliest film screenings, beginning in the 1890s, were in vaudeville theatres, suburban halls and open air venues (sporting ovals and the beach). In 1906 a cinema industry began to emerge and motion pictures were being shown in Bourke Street, the St Kilda Esplanade, the Town Hall and the Athenaeum.<sup>13</sup> The first purpose-built cinema in Melbourne was constructed at the corner of Sturt Street and City Road, South Melbourne in 1909.

The east end of Bourke Street became the epicentre of film theatres during the following decade with the Melba Theatre, in the former Queens Hall (1911), the Britannia (1912) among others, and by 1916 there were eight cinemas. The first permanent suburban theatre was established in 1910 – the Lyric, the first of a few with this name, in Prahran. By 1919, there were 11 cinemas in central Melbourne and 67 in the suburbs.<sup>14</sup> These cinemas typically accommodated in excess of 1,000 patrons.

The next decade however saw cinemas evolve into a much grander type, based on the picture palaces of the USA. The first of these was the Capitol in Swanston Street, designed by renowned architect, Walter Burley Griffin in 1924. By the final year of the decade, new benchmarks in opulence were reached with the State (now Forum) Theatre in Flinders Street and the Regent Theatre in Collins Street, both 1929. The 1930s, with the introduction of sound (in 1929) and the economic depression, brought about new imperatives in cinema design, which effectively ended this grand phase. More intimate, less complicated interiors were required for good acoustic performance and most construction activity was focused in the suburbs – with the extant Rivoli in Camberwell and Astor being prime examples of this period.

The advent of television in 1956 was a watershed moment for the industry as patronage fell by about half within three years and many cinemas were forced to close. Of the 124 operational suburban cinemas in 1956, 57 had closed by 1961. Some were reused for sporting facilities and later reception centres (eg Northcote Theatre and San Remo ballroom). A few inner city cinemas were employed during the 1960s to accommodate the growing migrant population, and exclusively showed foreign films, especially Italian or Greek (for example the Westgarth Theatre). From the 1970s, a few inner city theatres were employed for the growing interest in revivals and non-mainstream release, beginning with the Valhalla at 216 Victoria Street, Richmond (now demolished). In recent decades, the trend has been to develop multi-screened cinema venues.

## 2.3 Site

### Preliminary

Bridge Road developed as the main thoroughfare from Melbourne to the eastern suburbs. By the mid-1850s a retail and service strip had been established between Punt Road and Church Street, including butchers, drapers, a shoemaker, fruiterers, tailors, hairdressers and grocers.<sup>15</sup> A civic hub was established directly east of the subject site and comprised of the Town Hall (the earliest section dates to 1869-71), the two storey Police Station (1878) and the Post Office (circa 1871 - now demolished).<sup>16</sup> Tram services were introduced along Bridge Road in 1885.

A historic image from circa 1908 shows the west end of Bridge Road as an established commercial hub. The Police Station, Town Hall, and the front part of the subject site are shown.

<sup>12</sup> Citation – San Remo Ballroom (Jubilee Pictures/Adelphi) Thematic Study of Theatres in the City of Yarra (2017) – Stage 2 Report, 26 September 2017.

<sup>13</sup> M Lewis, 'Melbourne – The City's History and Development,' City of Melbourne, November 1995, p90

<sup>14</sup> D Catrice, 'Cinemas' in A Brown-May & S Swain (eds), *The Encyclopedia of Melbourne*, p135. This section primarily derives from this entry.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.victorianplaces.com.au/richmond> (accessed 10 April 2020)

<sup>16</sup> Victorian Heritage Database



Circa 1908, Bridge Road, Richmond, looking west.  
The front part of the subject site is indicated (arrow). To the right is the Police Station and Town Hall.  
(Source: SLV - H40395/54)

### 2.3.1 Phase 1 - Roller Skating Rink (1888-1916)

In 1888 tenders for the plumbing and gas fitting of the Richmond Skating Rink as well as blacksmith positions were advertised in *The Age* and the Richmond Skating Rink was constructed on the subject site.<sup>17</sup>

In 1889 the Skating Rink was purchased by James Watson who renamed it the 'Victorian Crystal Palace' and transformed the place into a 'Palace of Amusement.'<sup>18</sup> Watson spared no expense in decorating the interior incorporating 'fairy fountains, waterfalls, grottoes, ferneries.' A newspaper article dated 25 October provides a detailed description of the interior of the building.<sup>19</sup>

The idea has been well carried out, a cross between the Sydenham Crystal Palace, and the better class London Music Hall being the result. The decorations are decidedly superior, a scenic representation of an Australian forest at the far end of the building, first claiming attention. This has been excellently painted, and by the aid of a few ferns and real running water, an artistic effect has been reached that is quite delightful. The floor has been covered with a composition, that being green in colour and soft to the tread, not only gives it a lawn-like appearance, but so deadens the footfalls of the promenaders, that the singers are not all inconvenienced. It has a remarkably cool look, and combined with the large dimensions of the building, should ensure a liberal patronage during the ensuing hot weather. Lavatories, smoking rooms, cloak rooms, and every other conveniences both for ladies and gentlemen are provided, and a refreshment kiosk is well stocked for those who choose to patronise it.

The *Herald* provided further description of the interior and performers at the 'popular place of amusement.'<sup>20</sup>

In addition to these, there was a fountain display, which decidedly calls for remark and approval. By the aid of coloured limelight playing upon the rising water, a beautiful effect was obtained, and this alone was worth a visit to Richmond to see. Some good trick bicycle riding brought the performance to a conclusion. Notwithstanding the inclement weather, there was a large attendance, but we shall expect to see the palace more crowded in the summer, when the theatres are too close and stuffy for comfort.

<sup>17</sup> 'Tenders,' *Age*, 20 June 1888, p3; 'Situations Vacant,' *Age*, 23 June 1888, p5

<sup>18</sup> 'Family Notices – Amusements,' *Herald*, 18 October 1889, p2

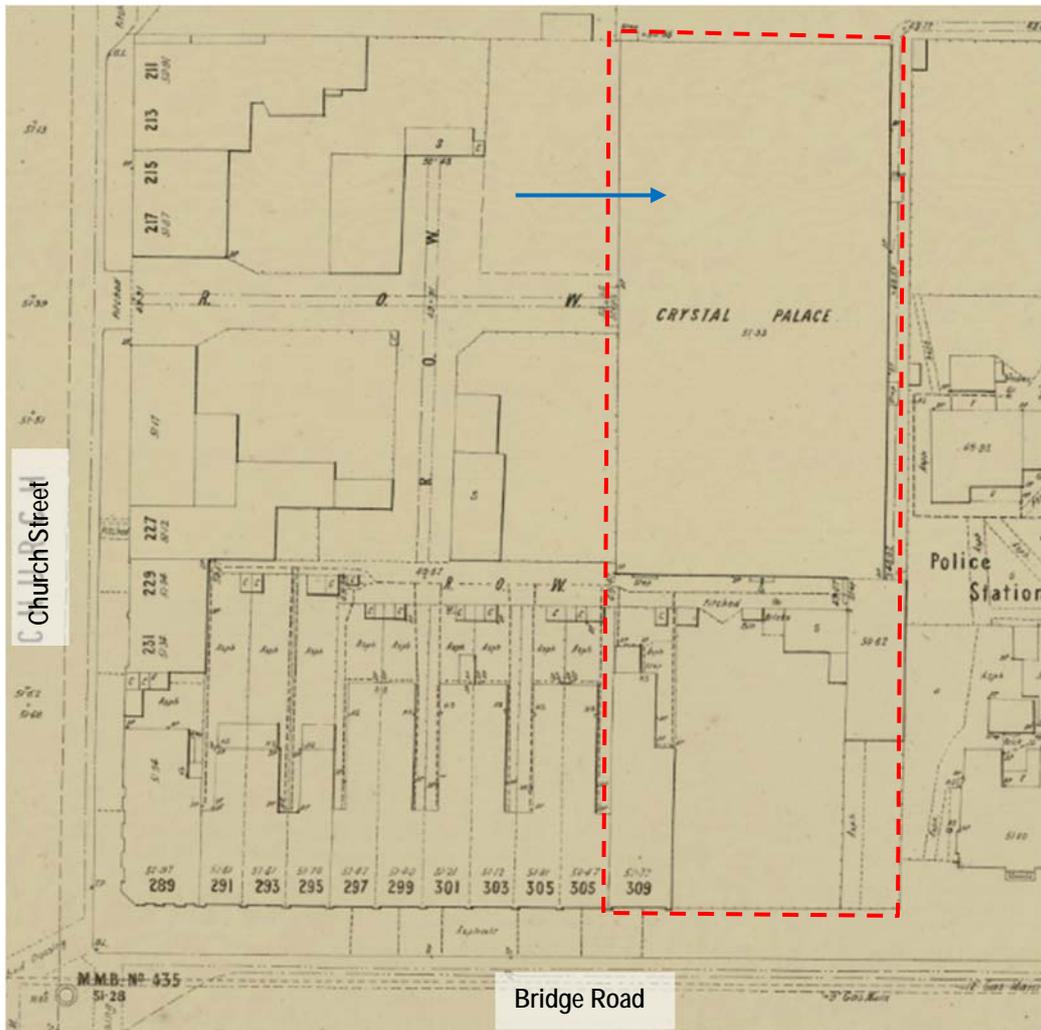
<sup>19</sup> 'The Victorian Crystal Palace,' *North Melbourne Advertiser*, 25 October 1889, p2

<sup>20</sup> 'Victorian Crystal Palace,' *Herald*, 28 October 1889, p4

Despite Watson's efforts the business venture was considered a financial failure, and only a month after his creditors were forced to seize on some of his goods.<sup>21</sup> The building retained the name the 'Crystal Palace' and reverted to operating as a roller skating rink under the management of Francis Peter Charles Beyer.<sup>22</sup> Beyer (1861-1937) was a national skating and roller polo champion who owned the Elite Skating Rink in St Kilda.<sup>23</sup>

The MMBW shows the footprints of the built fabric in 1898. The Crystal Palace had a rectangular, but longer, building footprint that was roughly equivalent to the combined footprint of the balcony, theatre section and fly tower, constructed in 1926. The footprint was similarly located on the northern part of the site where it extended to meet the north and west boundaries. To the west side was a right-of-way accessed from Church Street.

Directly adjacent to the building, to the south side, was a pitched 'laneway,' stables, and a small building with a rectangular footprint. The southern part of the site was relatively open and presumably functioned as the forecourt to the skating rink. To the west side was no. 309 (now demolished).



The subject site at the end of 19th century. The approximate boundaries of the subject site are shown (dashed red) and the 'Crystal Palace' is indicated (arrow).  
 (Source: MMBW Detail Plan No. 1053 (1898))

<sup>21</sup> 'Troubles of a Palace of Amusement Manager,' *Argus*, 14 November 1889, p5  
<sup>22</sup> The skating rink is listed in the 1892 Sands and McDougall's street directory as the 'Crystal Palace.' Some early 20<sup>th</sup> century newspaper articles continued to refer to the rink as the 'Richmond Skating Rink,' as it was originally known. ('Richmond Skating Rink,' *Richmond Guardian*, 24 September 1910, p2)  
<sup>23</sup> <http://licelegendsaustralia.com>, accessed 8 April 2020

Photographs circa 1900 show the interior of the Crystal Palace Roller Skating Rink. The roof structure was a steel and timber framed structure entirely clad in corrugated sheet metal and tie rods. Each framing unit had a curved member that converged with the upper rafter before diverging at the outer end. The outer section of the unit created an outer aisle which functioned as a public viewing space (a balustrade is evident). On the far (north) wall are scenic paintings of Australia, which appear to have been retained from the earlier 'palace of amusement' when it was owned by Watson.



Circa 1900 Crystal Palace Roller Skating Rink, Bridge Road, Richmond, showing the roof structure of the skating rink. (Source: SLV, H84.507/209)



Circa 1900, Crystal Palace Roller Skating Rink, Bridge Road, Richmond. (Source: <https://icelegendsaustralia.com/1stIceChampions-builders1.html#>, accessed 07/04/20)

In 1910 a storm occurred and the rink structure was described as a 'wood and iron' building. The rear (north) wall (about 30 feet high) collapsed and 'three yards of the iron roof' was also blown off.<sup>24</sup> The north wall is evident in an earlier photograph of the building taken one year prior, and shows the wall was of typical timber board construction and had a dado.

<sup>24</sup> 'Sensational Occurrence at Richmond,' *Age*, 26 April 1910, p8; 'Rink Building Damaged,' *Argus*, 26 April 1910, p5



1909 photograph – cropped image showing far (north) timber board wall and scenic paintings.  
(Source: SLV, H84.507/209)

### 2.3.2 Phase 2 – Roller Skating Rink Converted to a Cinema (1916-1926)

In 1916 the roller skating rink was converted into a cinema by the All-British Cinema Syndicate.<sup>25</sup> The 'biggest suburban picture theatre seats 3000' and features the 'finest professional orchestra... supported by vocalists, grand organs and chimes.'<sup>26</sup> Future improvements were to include the extension of the vestibule for the sale of refreshments.<sup>27</sup> The cinema was operated by the All-British Cinema Syndicate until 1917.<sup>28</sup>

The rink structure was an open and flexible space that would have easily accommodated large crowds of people and the transition to a cinema would have been relatively straight-forward. While new furnishings and linings would have been incorporated, only a small amount of physical change to the structure of the building may have been required.

By 1924 the building (then known as the Richmond Cinema) was being sub-leased by Richard Lean, to Hoyts Cinema.<sup>29</sup> A building valuation at the time revealed that while Lean had previously spent £4 000 on new flooring and seats, 'the building itself was a mere shell, the capital value of which was only a few thousand.'<sup>30</sup>

### 2.3.3 Phase 3 - Theatre Redevelopment - Hoyts Richmond Cinema (1926-60)

In 1926 the 'old skating rink' was 'transformed' and opened as Hoyts Richmond Cinema at a cost of more than £20 000.<sup>31</sup> The building was 'rebuilt' and designed by noted architects Gawler and Drummond for the Richmond Church Lands Trust, with Lean, as the lessee.<sup>32</sup> The building work was substantial and most fabric dating from the previous cinema building, was mostly demolished.

A contemporary illustration of the street façade depicts the proposed street façade and shows a grand street canopy, eye-catching signage and advertising posters fixed to the wing walls.

<sup>25</sup> 'All British Cinema, Next to Richmond Town Hall,' *Herald*, 16 September 1916, p6; 'All British Cinema Theatre, Richmond,' *Richmond Guardian*, 29 September 1917, p2

<sup>26</sup> 'Richmond All-British Cinema', *Herald*, 4 September 1916, p4

<sup>27</sup> 'All British Cinema, Next to Richmond Town Hall,' 16 September 1916, p6

<sup>28</sup> 'All British Cinema Theatre, Richmond,' *Richmond Guardian*, 29 September 1917, p2

<sup>29</sup> 'Picture Theatre Rates,' *Age*, 16 February 1924, p19

<sup>30</sup> 'Picture Theatre Rates,' *Age*, 16 February 1924, p19

<sup>31</sup> 'Richmond's Big Theatre, Skating Rink Converted,' *Herald*, 6 July 1927, p13

<sup>32</sup> 'New Picture Theatre,' *Age*, 11 July 1927, p18

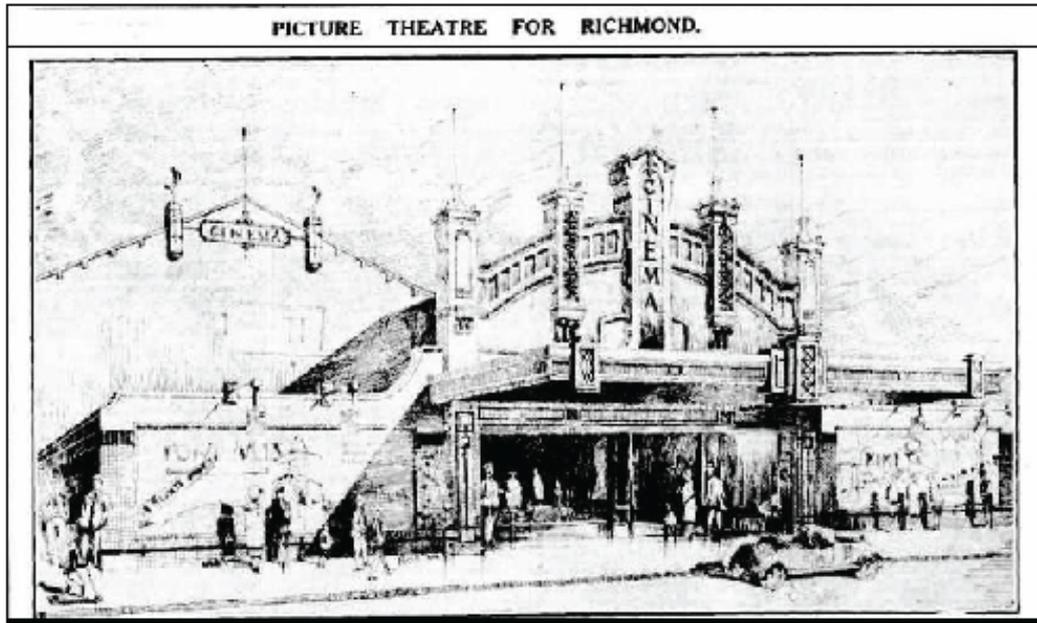


Illustration showing Gawler and Drummond's impression of the Bridge Road façade.  
(‘Picture Theatre for Richmond,’ *Argus*, 4 December 1926, p33)

A newspaper article dated 6 July 1927 provides a detailed description of the layout, features and finishes of the new theatre.<sup>33</sup>

#### RICHMOND'S BIG THEATRE Skating Rink Converted

The old skating rink, Bridge road, Richmond, has been transformed and on Saturday will be opened as Hoyts Cinema. The transformation has cost more than £20 000.

The old rink, which is next to the police station and the Town Hall has been used for some years as a picture theatre. It has now been rebuilt, solid brick walls taking the place of rusty old iron walls. A modern stage, fitted with fireproof screen and electric lighting, has been built so that vaudeville items may be included in the programme. A gallery is built at one end. The theatre now seats 2500 patrons.

Patrons enter a wide cantilever verandah, through doors 26ft. in width, to the main entrance lobby which is 30ft. wide, and more than 70ft. long.

The colour scheme is cream and bright red. The floor is covered with ceramic tiles, and matt surface tiles line the lower portion of the walls. At intervals on each side, attractive display windows are set in the walls. These will be as show windows. The ceiling is arched and is of modern fibrous plaster, with beams from which hang brilliant red lamps of classic design. A row of bronze wall brackets also supply light.

Marble steps and edgings complete one of the largest theatre entrance lobbies in the suburbs. Passing through the polished maple and copper doors at the end of the vestibule the foyer is entered. This is 64ft. long and 25 ft. wide, finished in English renaissance.

Over the whole foyer a reinforced concrete roof, carried on steel girders, prevents any risk of fire or any sound from bio-room immediately above. This bio-room is entirely constructed of reinforced concrete of ample capacity, and with the necessary adjoining rooms all of the same material.

The electrical fittings are most-up-date. For example, the tableau curtain is electrically operated from the bio-box.

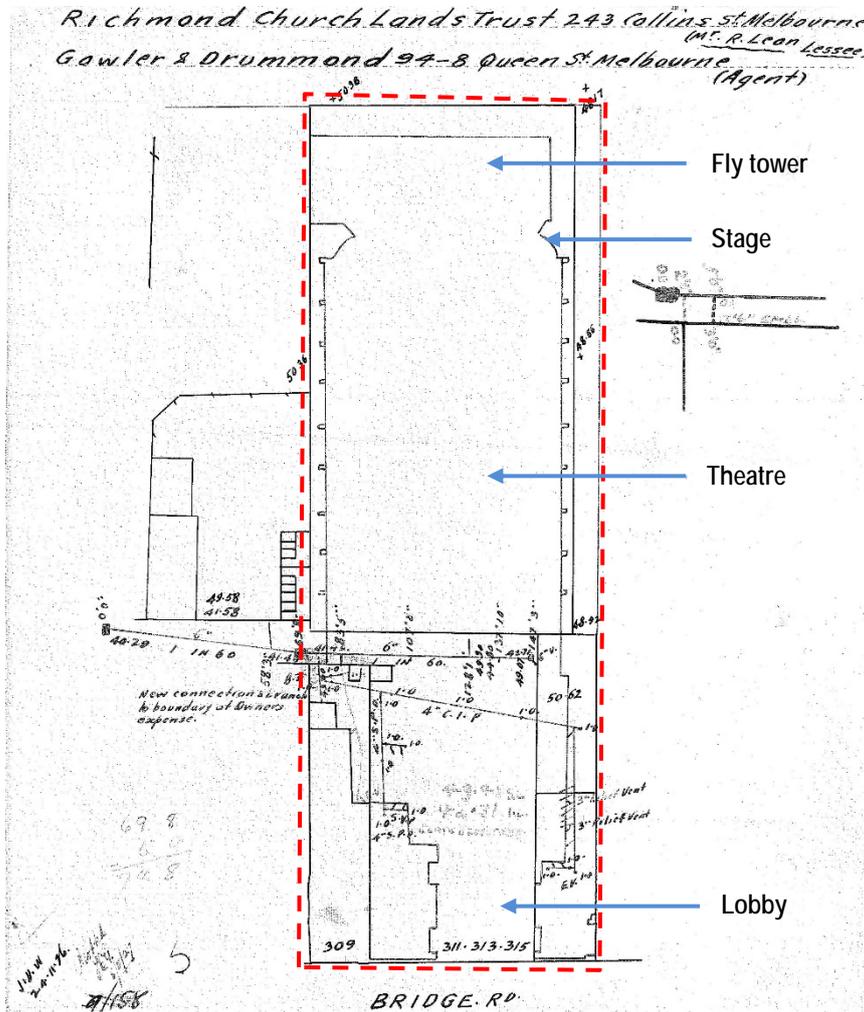
An attractive feature of the street front is the large display boards for posters with their dark tile frames and electric light projectors.

All the work has been designed and carried out by Messrs Gawler and Drummond.

<sup>33</sup>

‘Richmond’s Big Theatre, Skating Rink Converted,’ *Herald*, 6 July 1927, p13

The contemporary sewerage plan shows the footprint of the building on the site which consisted of sections. To the front of the site is the long lobby, with flanking walls either side. To the north half of the site is the theatre section, which has a rectangular footprint and was about two-thirds the size of the skating rink structure. The east and west walls were set back slightly from the boundaries of the site and included buttresses. The northern end is comprised of the stage, with angled side walls, and the fly tower.



1926 Sewerage Plan. The approximate boundaries of the subject site are shown (dashed red) and main sections of the building are indicated (blue arrow).  
(City West Water)

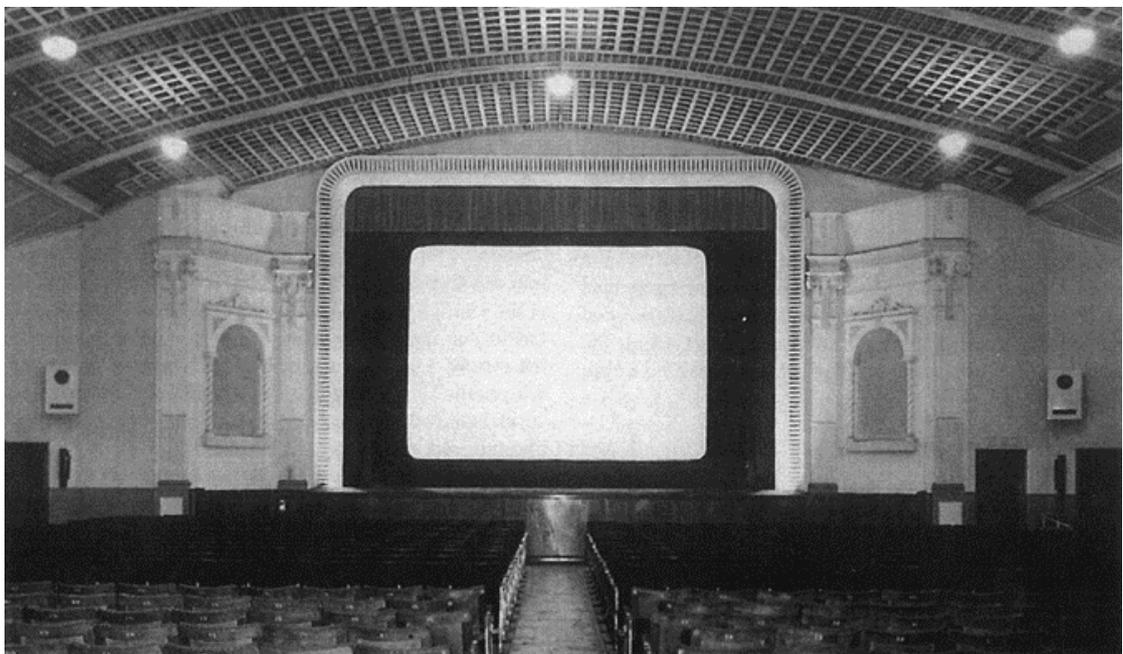
### Interior

An interior photograph circa 1938 shows the theatre as viewed from the gallery. On the far north wall is a large proscenium arch that frames the stage. The walls either side of the stage are angled and feature decorative niches with barley twist columns, pediments, and fluted pilasters. The perimeter wall has a dado to the lower section, and a series of grilles with a geometric motif, to the upper section. The ceiling is arched and features a timber lattice ceiling comprised of rectangular geometric 'panels.' The outer section of the ceiling has plaster sheeting and timber battens. Below the lattice ceiling are tie rods which are fixed to the outer wall.

In the immediate foreground is the balcony, which has tiered seating and a balustrade lined with timber boards. The arched opening in the upper edge of the image, shows the inside face of the wall as having board and batten timber lining. The balcony is located in the taller, middle section of the site.



Circa 1938 - Interior of Hoyts Cinema, Richmond  
(Source: SLV H2009.177/35)



Circa 1938 - Interior of Hoyts Cinema, Richmond  
(‘Memories of the Cinema,’ Cinema Record, no. 28, 2000, p26)

A photograph circa 1938 shows the street level, elongated entrance lobby which had an arched, panelled ceiling and beams, and a tiled floor with a geometric border (a small section of which survives). A distinctive ticket box was located to the front of the lobby and at the far end were three pairs of double doors which led to the foyer.



Circa 1930s, Hoyts Cinema, Richmond - Entrance lobby showing the distinctive ticket box, arched ceiling and floor tiles.  
(Source: Cinema Record, no. 33, 2001, p31)

A photograph of the lounge shows a similar arched ceiling, but with a more elaborate geometric pattern featuring squares and diamonds. To the left of the image were a series of doors with large glazed panes that featured decorative motifs. Modern light fittings were positioned along the wall and hung from the arched ceiling above.



Possibly circa 1938, Hoyts Cinema, Richmond – Lounge  
(Cinema Record, no. 33, 2001, p31)

### Exterior

Photographs circa 1940 show the elaborate Bridge Road façade. The middle section had a prominent arched parapet, and five piers with brackets and contrasting decorative mouldings. The central pier was the most ornate and had a sign that vertically read 'Hoyts.' A second illuminated sign was positioned perpendicular to this. A substantial street canopy spanned across the width of the entry, and had Art Deco motifs and decorative pressed metal to the outer face and soffit.

The tiled entry was recessed with angled side walls, and had sets of double doors and highlights. The entry opening had a stepped architrave with columns either side, featuring mottled tiles. The flanking walls were finished in a combination of light coloured tiles with a dark edge and an upper rendered part. Cantilevered flood lights were fixed to the cornice and highlighted the latest movie posters

In the background of the photograph the extant gable end of the taller, middle (balcony) bay and concrete bio-box is evident.

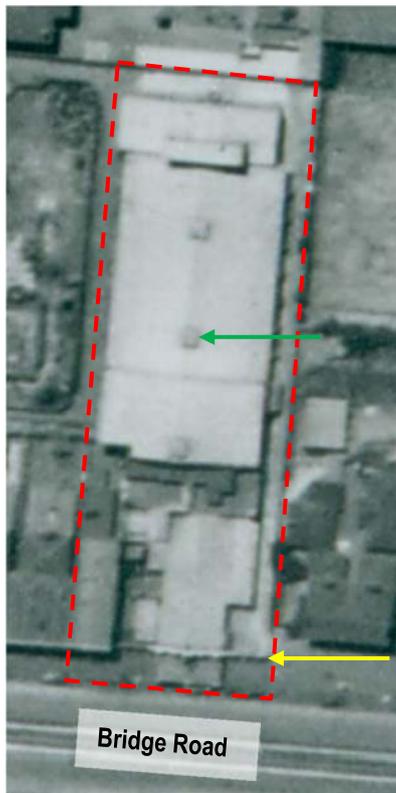


Circa 1938, Hoyts Cinema, Richmond – Bridge Road façade showing entrance canopy, decorative parapet, and wing walls (Cinema Record, no. 28, 2000, p24)



Circa 1944 - Exterior of Hoyts Cinema, Richmond (H2009.177/54)

The 1945 aerial shows the gabled roof form of the theatre building and ventilators along the ridge. The flanking walls on the Bridge Road façade, act as a 'screen' between the road and the front section of the site, part of which is an open courtyard.



1945 aerial showing the approximate boundaries of the site (dashed red). The roof ventilators on the theatre roof (green arrow) and wing walls to the front of the site (yellow arrow) are indicated.  
(Source: Melbourne and Metropolitan Area Project no. 5, Run 23, Frame 58785)

The site operated as 'Hoyts Cinema Picture Theatre' until at least 1960.<sup>34</sup>

#### Hoyts Theatres Limited

Hoyts Theatres Limited was established in 1926 with Francis W Thring (1882–1936) as the managing director.<sup>35</sup> In 1929 The Regent Theatre on Collins Street was constructed as the flagship theatre of Thring's Hoyts chain. In 1930 Thring sold his holdings to Fox Film Corporation.

### 2.3.4 Phase 4 - Post-Cinema Phase (circa 1960 to present)

By 1963 the elaborate parapet had most likely been removed from the street façade<sup>36</sup> and by 1964 the site had been converted into a car showroom by Whiteford Motors, Richmond.<sup>37</sup> By 1970 popular car agents, Kevin Dennis Motors were operating from the site.<sup>38</sup> The 1974 aerial shows some modifications to the building. The ventilators on the theatre roof and the east addition to the front part of the site has been widened and elongated.

<sup>34</sup> The citation for the 'Former Richmond Cinema' prepared by Context states Hoyts ceased operating from the site in 1958. The *Sands & McDougall's Directory* list Hoyts as occupying the site in 1960, however there is typically a 1-2 year delay. *Sands & McDougall's Directory*, 1960, p694.

<sup>35</sup> In 1926, J C Williamson Films Ltd, and Hoyts Pty, merged to form Hoyts Pty Ltd. (J. P. Holroyd, 'Thring, Francis William (Frank) (1882–1936)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University*, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/thring-francis-william-frank-8803/text15439>, published first in hardcopy 1990, accessed online 11 April 2020)

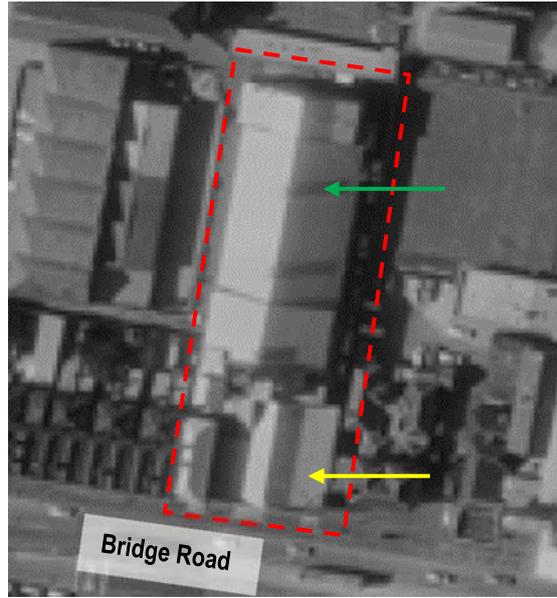
<sup>36</sup> Landata, 1963 aerial, Melbourne Project Run 13 Frame 191

<sup>37</sup> 'Whiteford Motors' were used Volkswagen car dealers. ('Advertisement – Whiteford Motors, Richmond,' *Age*, May 30 1964, p34); *Sands & McDougall's Directory*, 1965, p730. The site is listed as 309-13 Bridge Road, Richmond.

<sup>38</sup> *Sands & McDougall's Directory*, 1970-74, various



1963 (April) aerial. The elaborate parapet has most likely been removed.  
(Source: Melbourne Project Run 13 Frame 191)



1975 (November) aerial showing the approximate boundaries of the site (dashed red). The roof ventilators on the theatre roof have been removed (green arrow) and the east addition to the front of the site has been modified (yellow arrow).  
(Source: ALSO A.P.1227, Run 30 Frame 135)

By 1981 the street façade had been completely remodelled. The 1981 photograph shows the introduction of large showroom windows along the Bridge Road façade and part of the east (side) elevation. The upper section of the building has a parapet roof with large painted signage (BBQ's Galore) and has been painted white.



1981 photograph from Bridge Road showing the Richmond Town Hall and subject site is to the left of the image (arrow). The street façade has been remodelled as BBQ's Galore.  
(Source: Richmond Town Hall, NAA, series no. B583, 3/1981)

By 2007 the façade had been further remodelled and the parapet enlarged, and the former fly tower had been demolished.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup>

Googlemaps Street View, December 2007.

### 3 DESCRIPTION

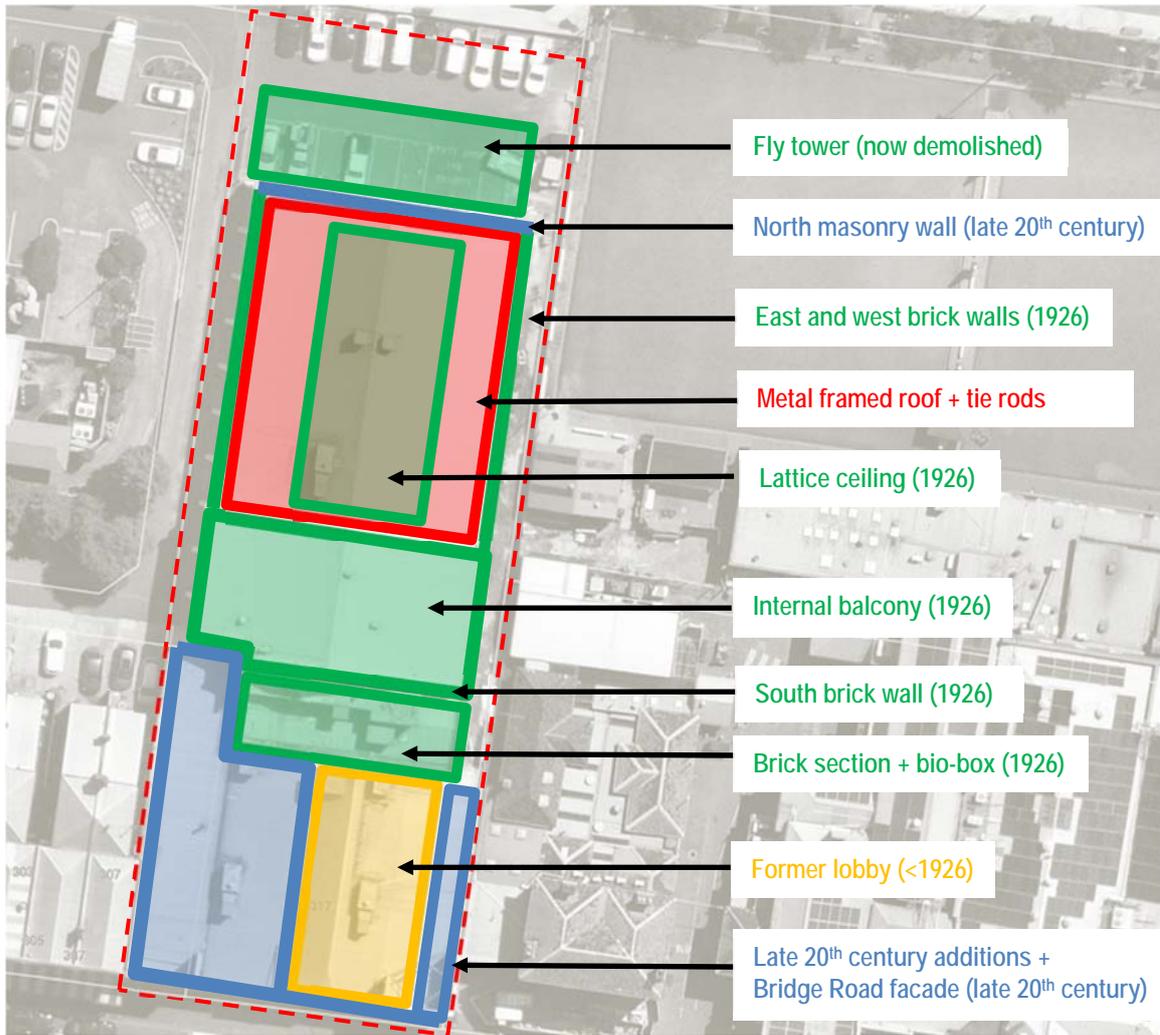
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#### 3.1 Overview of Development of the Subject Site

The extant façade has been completely rebuilt/remodelled as a showroom for the current occupants (BBQ's Galore). The extant building consists of remnant sections from various stages of construction. These sections and their associated stage of construction has been outlined below and summarised in the following section.



The current street façade has been entirely remodelled as a showroom. Large glazed shopfronts and bold signage have been introduced.



Overview of Development of the Subject Site  
(Basemap sourced from Nearmaps 2020)

Legend		
Date		Stage of Construction
1888	<span style="color: red;">—</span>	Skating rink is constructed.
<1926	<span style="color: yellow;">—</span>	The site operates as a skating rink and is 'converted' into a cinema.
1926-27	<span style="color: green;">—</span>	The rink is 'rebuilt' as a theatre. Gawler and Drummond are the architects.
Late 20 <sup>th</sup> century	<span style="color: blue;">—</span>	Additions

### 3.2 Front Part of the Site

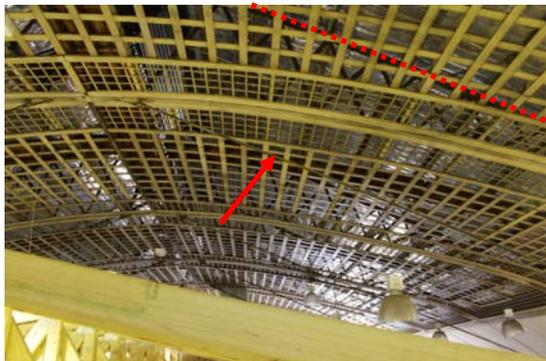
Section of Building and/or Fabric	Photo
<p><b>Bridge Road Façade (Barbeques Galore)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The front façade has been entirely rebuilt or remodelled during the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.</li> <li>The facade has a stepped parapet and large aluminium framed shopfronts.</li> <li>While the façade is symmetrical, it functions as a 'screen' and has little relationship with the roof forms beyond</li> <li>Beyond the façade, is a gable roofed section, which dates to the 1926 phase.</li> </ul>	 <p>Bridge Road facade</p>
<p><b>Lobby (Former)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internally, the former lobby has been completely remodelled as a showroom and has modern linings.</li> <li>A section of the floor retains ceramic floor tiles dating from the 1926 theatre phase. This section has square cream/white tiles and a decorative border of red and blue square tiles.</li> <li>The roof space was not visible due to suspended ceilings having been installed.</li> </ul>	 <p>Decorative floor tiles</p>
<p><b>East Addition</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To the east side is a rectangular section with a skillion roof. The rear (north) brick wall was constructed circa 1950s and has a wide opening with timber board double doors and concrete lintel.</li> </ul>	 <p>North (rear) wall</p>
<p><b>West Additions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To the west side is a section with skillion roofs.</li> <li>The west brick wall was constructed in various stages during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is obscured by the adjacent site (309 Bridge Road).</li> </ul>	 <p>West (side) wall</p>

### 3.3 Former Theatre - Exterior

Section of Building and/or Fabric	Photo
<p><b>East and west (side) brick walls</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The east and west brick walls date from 1926 and are part of the theatre design by architects Gawler and Drummond.</li> <li>• The walls are red brick in an English garden bond configuration, in this instance five stretcher courses to every header course. The walls have brick buttresses, with each buttress having three offsets.</li> <li>• The red brick remains exposed on the east wall while the west wall has been overpainted, as do the concrete lintels. At the base of the wall are terracotta vents.</li> <li>• The ground floor windows are original steel multi-paned windows with hoppers.</li> <li>• On the west wall is an original door with vertical timber boards.</li> </ul>	 <p>East (side) wall</p>  <p>East (side) wall – steel multi-paned hopper window and concrete lintel</p>
<p><b>South wall</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The south brick wall has a gable end (partly obscured by graffiti) with corbelled ends.</li> <li>• The upper part of the gable end is visible from the opposite side of Bridge Road.</li> </ul>	 <p>South wall – gable end as viewed from Bridge Road</p>
<p><b>North (rear) wall</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The north wall was added in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the fly tower was removed.</li> <li>• The gabled form of the 1926 building has been retained.</li> </ul>	 <p>North (rear) wall</p>

Section of Building and/or Fabric	Photo
<p><b>Roof</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The roof has been clad with metal sheeting. Modern vents and platforms have been added to the roof.</li> <li>• Gutters, downpipes and fascias have been added.</li> <li>• Original ventilators or the like have been removed.</li> </ul>	 <p>Roof from north-west corner of the site</p>
<p><b>Brick section and concrete bio-box – middle balcony bay</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The brick section including bio-box and roof deck was constructed in 1926 with possible modifications.</li> <li>• It is designed in a similar aesthetic to the main theatre building - red brick with concrete lintels.</li> <li>• The metal balustrade has thin horizontal railings.</li> </ul>	 <p>East side of brick section</p>

### 3.4 Former Theatre - Interior

Section of Building and/or Fabric	Photo
<p><b>Metal Framed Roof and Tie Rods</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sections of the metal framed roof and tie rods date to 1888.</li> <li>• The roof structure is partly obscured by the later lattice ceiling however metal bracing is visible.</li> <li>• Additional bracing has been added to the outer ends (adjacent to the east and west wall), and between some units.</li> </ul>	 <p>Metal roof structure above lattice ceiling – the line of the upper frame is indicated (dashed red). Tie rods below lattice ceiling (arrow)</p>

Section of Building and/or Fabric	Photo
<p><b>Ceiling – central lattice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The hardwood timber lattice component of the ceiling (now painted) was presumably introduced in 1926.</li> <li>• The ceiling is arched/vaulted and features a series of rectangular geometric 'panels.' Each panel consists of an inner section comprised of wide timber strips. This is surrounded by a border of narrow timber strips. In each corner is a circular motif.</li> <li>• A decorative timber cornice runs the full length of the lattice ceiling.</li> </ul>	 <p>Lattice ceiling showing geometric 'panels'</p>
<p><b>Ceiling - outer linings and decorative elements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To its outer edges, the ceiling is lined with decorative plaster sheeting with timber battens, including diamond motifs.</li> <li>• This section dates to 1926.</li> <li>• On the walls are some decorative grilles and registers in the neo-classical and Art Deco style.</li> </ul>	 <p>Decorative board and battened timber lining</p>  <p>Decorative grilles and motifs</p>
<p><b>Balcony/Mezzanine Level</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The balcony is sloped, allowing for tiered seating (now removed).</li> <li>• The front of the balcony features decorative pressed metal with an Art Nouveau design.</li> <li>• The outer ends of the wall are lined with metal sheeting and edged with a square column in a classical mode.</li> <li>• The balcony is supported by two slender columns in the mid-line of the balcony (encased in partition wall).</li> </ul>	 <p>Decorative pressed metal with Art Nouveau designs</p>

Section of Building and/or Fabric	Photo
<p><b>Terrazzo and timber staircases</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The staircases were likely constructed in 1926.</li> <li>• The terrazzo staircase has a timber moulded handrail.</li> </ul>	 <p>Terrazzo staircase</p>

### 3.5 Summary of Changes to the Site/Place

The subject site is complex in its development and consists of a group of sections with some interrelated building fabric dating from the various phases of construction. The most distinctive spaces and/or elements from the main phases of the building (roller skating rink, conversion to a cinema, construction of a theatre) have largely been removed/demolished. The main changes to the building have been summarised.

- The building footprint of the 1888 skating rink has been truncated on all sides. The central part of the roof framing unit has been removed to the north and south sides, and the viewing aisles have been removed to the east and west sides.
- External brick walls with buttresses have been constructed, filling in the sections between the inner columns of the original roof frame.
- Additional bracing/support has been added to the metal roof structure.
- The majority of the main spaces constructed during the 1926 cinema phase have been completely removed. This includes the entire 'Hoyts Cinema' street façade consisting of the recessed entry, signage and wing walls and Art Deco motifs. The façade has been redesigned with large openings to accommodate the various showrooms in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century including the current occupants, BBQ's Galore.
- The entrance lobby and lounge, including the original ticket box, all internal linings, doors and architraves, decorative features, and light fittings have been removed. The one exception is a small area of remnant floor tiles in the showroom where the entrance lobby was located.
- The large open space of the theatre remains but the majority of the main elements have been removed. The proscenium arch, stage and fly tower has been demolished. The rear (north) wall (former location of the stage) has been filled in with a concrete wall and metal frame clad with sheeting. While angled walls to each side of the stage remain, they have been stripped of all decorative elements.
- The dado to perimeter wall and cinema seating has been removed.
- While the arched opening of the balcony has been filled in, it remains legible. The inside of the balcony has been highly modified, the floor has been levelled and original linings removed.

## 4 REVIEW OF SIGNIFICANCE

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### 4.1 Introduction

This section provides a brief summary of cinema design and the role of cinema spaces as relevant to the subject site. It includes comparative analysis of similar buildings designed during the 1910-20s. It concludes with a discussion on the extant remnant fabric of the building and its heritage value.

### 4.2 Design Analysis

#### Cinema Design

'Hoyts Cinema Richmond,' was modelled on the 'picture palace,' which referred to the large, highly decorated city cinemas of the 1920s. In Australia, many of the picture palaces had richly fronted facades. In the suburbs and country towns, what appeared to be 'a huge shed...was sometimes behind a poster-covered high fence.' The façades were exuberant and designed to make a visual statement while also giving emphasis to the wide entrance. They were bold and highly decorated, and often incorporated elements in the classical mode.

The street façade designed by Gawler & Drummond in 1926-27, was symmetrical and divided into three sections; the central entry, and the two outer flanking walls. The central section had a wide, street canopy over the entrance. The parapet above was curved and adorned with decorative mouldings. The central pier was the most ornate and had a 'Hoyts' sign.

Internally, the spaces were designed as a gradual progression through the building. From the entrance lobby, the patron would enter the foyer, before coming 'to a dramatic climax when one emerged in the auditorium.' The spaces provided an escape from the outside world. Lavish furniture, carpet and modern light fittings contributed to the experience. Picture palaces typically employed 'exotic' Spanish/Moorish/Venetian styles, however this influence was less apparent in Australia, where elements of the classical mode generally prevailed.

The main theatre/auditorium was the most elaborate space and typically consisted of a balcony/gallery, overlooking the circle (seating area) which faced the proscenium arch and stage. The proscenium frame was often richly decorated, highlighting the stage as the focal point of the space. To each side of the proscenium were decorative niches.

#### Gawler & Drummond

The 1926 cinema building was designed by prolific architects Gawler & Drummond. The firm designed a range of domestic, industrial, commercial and church buildings during the Interwar period, however are not known to have designed any other cinema buildings.<sup>40</sup> Probably their most renowned building is the Grainger Museum at the University of Melbourne constructed in 1935, with additions in 1938.

John Stevens Gawler (1885-1978) emigrated from England to Melbourne in 1886. He worked for an architect prior to becoming a junior draftsman. In 1914 he entered into partnership with Walter A Drummond (1890-1930), and in 1920 was appointed lecturer at the University of Melbourne before becoming Dean of the faculty in 1938. Gawler is noted as an influential educator, activist and reformer rather than as a design architect.

Despite Drummond's death in 1930, the firm continued to be known as Gawler & Drummond until 1941.

### 4.3 Comparative Analysis

There are various examples of cinemas constructed on the model of the Picture Palace in Richmond. Some are still standing while others have been demolished.

Local examples include:

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<sup>40</sup> Miles Lewis, 'Gawler, John Stevens (1885-1978)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/gawler-john-stevens-10285/text18195>, published first in hardcopy 1996, accessed online 11 April 2020.

- National Picture Theatre (former), 177 Bridge Road, Richmond, east corner of Judd Street. The site is located within H0310, with no internal controls. The theatre was constructed by 1912 at the corner of Lennox Street and was considered the 'Pioneer of Picture Theatres'.<sup>41</sup> The space was ventilated and had a sliding roof and electric fans. In 1935 the building underwent a major refurbishment<sup>42</sup> however the Moderne style façade has been retained. Apartments have more recently been constructed on the site.
- Globe Theatre, 409 Church Street, Richmond (now demolished). The Globe Theatre had been constructed by 1912 when it was operated by the Richmond Picture Theatre Property Ltd.<sup>43</sup> An extensive programme of grand opera, beauty competitions and matinees were provided. The theatre closed in 1974.<sup>44</sup>
- The New Richmond Theatre (aka Richmond Theatre), 339-345 Bridge Road, east corner of Gleadell Street (now demolished). The theatre was constructed in 1912 for Amalgamated Pictures and seated 1200.<sup>45</sup> Designed by F G Richardson the theatre had 'an imposing appearance' and consisted of a 'massive front and ornamental embellishments.' The interior 'is also up to expectations, the visitor on entering being struck with its spacious, lofty, and light appearance.'<sup>46</sup> The building ceased functioning as a theatre in 1926.

There are various examples of extant cinemas that were originally constructed with a lattice or trellis ceiling however, these are primarily located in regions outside of Melbourne. In some instances, it is not clear whether the lattice ceiling remains.

The lattice or trellis ceiling was a popular feature during the 1920s. It was an attractive visual element that was often enhanced by coloured lighting, reinforcing the spectacle of the theatre. It also functioned as part of a ventilation system during the warmer months.

Examples include:

- The former Coliseum in North Sydney. Constructed in 1911 as a theatre, it was 'transformed' in 1921 by Sydney based, theatre architects Messrs Kaberry and Chard.<sup>47</sup> The new design consisted of an auditorium balcony and boxes, the latter decorated with fibrous plaster enriched ornaments where 'no effect of bareness is apparent.' The interior treatment 'has a light and decorated trellis ceiling,' and the proscenium has classical columns and entablatures. 'The whole of the interior has been finished in delicate shades of brown, gold and bronze, which harmonise with the curtains and furnishings.' Only a portion of the building survives, as the Independent Theatre. It is not clear whether the lattice ceiling remains.
- Theatre in Alberton (1924). The new theatre building was built by the Ozone Amusements Limited Enterprise. The theatre showed motion pictures, vaudeville and also provided a dance floor.<sup>48</sup> The building consisted of a stage setting, 'beautiful entrance lobby, dress circle' and marble floors in the dress circle, entrance staircases and lobby. A trellis ceiling with fibrous plaster enrichments was enhanced by an 'especially arranged indirect lighting system.' The building is now a supermarket however the form of the cinema and parts of the façade are intact.

<sup>41</sup> 'Amusements,' *Richmond Guardian*, 13 July 1912, p3

<sup>42</sup> <http://cinematreasures.org/theaters/38720>, accessed 14 April 2020

<sup>43</sup> 'Amusements,' *Richmond Guardian*, 13 July 1912, p3

<sup>44</sup> <http://cinematreasures.org/theaters/52833>, accessed 14 April 2020

<sup>45</sup> 'The Pictures,' *Richmond Australian*, 14 September 1912, p2

<sup>46</sup> 'The Richmond Theatre,' *Richmond Australian*, 13 April 1912, p3

<sup>47</sup> 'Ancient history behind Western Sydney's 'epic' Coliseum theatre,' [Dailytelgraph.com.au](http://Dailytelgraph.com.au), December 13, 2019, accessed 14 April 2020; 'Buildings and Works, Theatre at North Sydney,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 September 1921, p9

<sup>48</sup> 'New Picture Theatre for Alberton,' *Port Adelaide News*, 29 February 1924, p7



Ozone Theatre in Alberton, Adelaide. Constructed in 1924, the theatre has a trellis ceiling with a geometric design. (Source: <http://cinematreasures.org/theaters/35462/photos/39473>)

- State Theatre, Market Street, Sydney (1926-29). The theatre was designed by prolific theatre and cinema architect Henry White. The theatre consisted of fourteen large chandeliers with coloured bulbs.<sup>49</sup> The plaster trellis ceiling in the auditorium was illuminated by concealed coloured flood lights. 'The beautiful hues blending and changing will make the theatre a veritable fairyland.' The theatre is one of Sydney's most iconic performance theatres and is recognised as having national significance.

#### 4.4 Discussion of the Remnant Fabric

The remnant section of the metal roof frame and tie rods to the main theatre section (auditorium) date from 1888, during the first phase of construction and have some heritage value as the earliest fabric (albeit not intact) on the site. Historic images of the building as a skating rink, show that the extant metal roof framing formed part of a larger roof system. The system is considered a rather basic approach to achieving generous spans and was utilised for 'shed-like' structures.

The integrity of the system has been compromised by the removal of the outer section (the aisles), and further bracing has been added. The remaining roof framing elements are merely fragments of a larger structural system that has been modified to be incorporated into a masonry building.

The 1926 street façade, designed by the architects Gawler and Drummond, was a bold and eye-catching design representative of the 'palatial' cinema typology that was established in Melbourne during the 1920s. This exuberance was typical for much contemporary cinema design and it related to the public demand for new experiences. The sequence and transition of spaces - through the lobby, foyer, and lounge to the auditorium (with proscenium and stage) - was integral to the experience. Arched/vaulted ceilings, decorative features, linings, modern fittings and the latest technology contributed to this ambiance.

The former lobby, foyer and lounge, stage and proscenium arch have been entirely removed so that the extant elements from the 1926/27 phase - part of the auditorium and front of the balcony - whilst partly intact are completely disconnected from their context at the end of sequence of cinema/theatre building spaces. Furthermore, the design of the extant façade does not resemble or suggest that of an Interwar period picture theatre.

<sup>49</sup>

'Lighting 'The state', Palatial Beauty of Newest Theatre,' *Gundagai Independent*, 11 February 1929, p3

The main theatre space/auditorium retains elements of the 1926 design including the arched timber lattice ceiling and batted sheeting (diamonds and mouldings) to the outer sections, balcony balustrade, and a few decorative elements to the side walls. It is curious to note that for what today appears as the most distinctive feature, there is no mention of the lattice ceiling in articles which describe other spaces of the cinema in detail.<sup>50</sup>

A lattice or trellis ceiling in the main theatre was not uncommon throughout the 1920s and was sometimes incorporated as part of a ventilation system with large ventilator towers to the roof. The ceiling was enhanced by special cinema lighting, contributing to the visual effect of the theatre. While the lattice ceiling has some heritage value, its design results in an unusual visual relationship between it, the outer ceiling linings and the metal roof framing above and in itself is insufficient to provide an understanding of the space as a former cinema/theatre.

## 4.5 Conclusion

Currently the front (south) part of the site is included within the Bridge Road precinct overlay (HO310) as a contributory place while the northern half is not. From our review, the front part of the site is the least intact section of the earlier phases of construction. The extant street façade was extensively rebuilt or remodelled during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the exuberant façade designed by notable architects Gawler & Drummond, removed. This included the wide recessed entrance and canopy, wall and floor tiles, elaborate parapet, signage, and flanking walls. In 1964 the building was repurposed to accommodate substantial car showrooms, which operated from the site for at least ten years. It is not clear when the façade was altered but presumably was initially 'opened up' to some degree to allow the place to function as a car showroom. By 1981 the current format had been established. The extant façade consists of large showroom windows and a contemporary parapet roof, and is no longer suggestive of an Interwar period picture theatre.

All theatre spaces and building fabric dating from the cinema phase have been almost entirely demolished from the front part of the site. This includes the former lobby, vestibule, foyer, ticket box, decorative linings and mouldings, maple and copper doors, fittings and fixtures. The only heritage fabric of interest is a small remnant section of ceramic floor tiles indicating the location of the former lobby, as well as the roof form of the lobby which most likely survives. From our review, there is little/if any intact section dating to the cinema phase on the front part of the site that would warrant heritage protection.

The earliest remnants (although not intact) are located on the north half of the site. The metal roof framing sections and tie rods date from the skating rink/19<sup>th</sup> century phase of the site, however the integrity of the original fabric has been compromised by modifications and the design of the roller skating rink is no longer discernible.

The brick walls, lattice ceiling and balcony balustrade date from the cinema phase of the site, however the space is no longer recognisable as being part of a cinema building. The remnant sections are merely fragments of a place whose original purpose is not necessarily clear.

The Practice Note states that applying internal alterations controls 'should be applied sparingly and on a selective basis to special interiors of high significance.'<sup>51</sup> From our review, the north half of the site consists of series of fragments from two different phases that are no longer legible. The front part of the site is the least intact section and contains little/if any heritage fabric, worthy of protection.

While there are remnant historic elements from the two main phases of development - phase 1 [1888-1916] and phase 3 [1926-58]), with the remnant parts from phase 1 being re-used/modified in phase 3 - the building lacks sufficient cohesiveness to either of these key phases so that either phase's original design is not readily discernible or able to be interpreted. As such, the building does not warrant an individual heritage overlay with internal controls.

<sup>50</sup> 'Richmond's Big Theatre, Skating Rink Converted,' *Herald*, 6 July 1927, p13

<sup>51</sup> 'Applying the Heritage Overlay' Practice Note, 2015, p5

## Appendix - Statement of Significance for the Bridge Road Precinct (HO310)

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### What is significant?

Bridge Road precinct, Richmond is significant. It is a predominantly 19th and early 20th century commercial strip and Richmond's civic hub, with a contribution from interwar buildings, which has the following key characteristics.

One and two-storey Victorian and Edwardian-era shops with (but not exclusively):

- Typically living accommodation over or at the rear of ground level shops;
- Typically configured as continuous rows with no front or side boundary setbacks, typically set out on a 6m wide module;
- Some distinctive individually significant building designs;
- Typically parapeted building forms with concealed pitched roofs;
- Typically vertically oriented rectangular openings, symmetrically arranged, to the upper level facades;
- Typically stuccoed facades having trabeation and ornamentation derived from Italian Renaissance architecture but also with some face brick for early Victorian-era (bichrome, polychrome) and Edwardian-era (pressed red brick) buildings;
- Some use of upper level verandahs or loggias for residential use;
- Once typically extensive post-supported street verandahs, timber and iron construction, with some cantilever awnings for 20th century buildings; and
- Once typically large display windows at ground level, timber framed with plinths, and recessed tiled or stone paved entries, some remaining (see 383 Bridge Rd) also some metal framed (brass, copper) shopfronts for early 20th century buildings.

Contributory elements also include:

- Hotels from the nineteenth and early to mid twentieth centuries, typically on corner sites;
- Inter-war buildings, some with original or early shop fronts;
- Architecturally significant buildings that express a range of key commercial development periods in the City;
- Tramlines and any associated tram shed sites;
- Traditional street elements such as bluestone pitched crossings, kerbs, and gutters, cast-iron grates, and asphalt paved footpaths; and
- The Richmond City Hall complex, with associated former Court House and Police Station; and
- Industrial landmarks such as the former Finchams Organ Factory.

### How is it significant?

The Bridge Road precinct is aesthetically and historically significant to the locality of Richmond and the City of Yarra.

### Why is it significant?

The precinct is historically significant (Criterion A):

- As one Richmond's principal thoroughfares, which leads to the first bridge to connect Richmond to Hawthorn, retaining many early Victorian-era shops.
- As an important commercial precinct in Richmond, particularly expressive of the 19th and early 20th centuries and incorporating Richmond's civic hub.
- For the tramlines as the functional descendants of those originally installed in 1885.
- For the contribution of Individually Significant or Contributory buildings that express a range of key development periods in the street and the City.

The precinct is architecturally and aesthetically significant (Criteria D & E):

- For the architectural continuity and high integrity of upper level facades to their construction date.
- For some well-preserved early shopfronts from the Victorian to the inter-war period.
- For the good and distinctive examples of Victorian and Edwardian-era architectural styles and ornamentation as evocative of the street's premier role in Richmond.
- For the examples of shop buildings from the 1920s and 1930s that relate well to the dominant Victorian-era and Edwardian-era scale and character.
- For traditional street elements such as bluestone kerbs, pitched crossings, gutters and asphalt footpaths.
- For the landmark quality of the Richmond Town Hall, with associated Court House and Police Station.