SUMMARY OF STATE HERITAGE PLACE

REGISTER ENTRY

Entry in the South Australian Heritage Register in accordance with the *Heritage Places Act 1993*

NAME:	Ferrari House (former Eagle Star Insurance Building)	**PLACE NO.: 14099**	

ADDRESS: 28-30 Grenfell Street, Adelaide SA 5000

CT5849/638, CT5849/639, CT5849/640, CT5849/641, CT5849/642, CT5849/643, CT5849/644, CT5849/645, CT5849/646, CT5849/647, CT5849/649, CT5959/263 C20905 Hundred of Adelaide

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Ferrari House (former Eagle Star Insurance building) constructed in 1967-1968, is an outstanding example of the modern commercial buildings that irrevocably changed the city's skyline between 1955 to c1970, an important period of architectural transition in the city of Adelaide. The building pronounced the shift towards modernism in terms of both design and the use of materials and construction techniques, and the built form and curtain wall retain a high degree of integrity.

Ferrari House is also an outstanding example of a Post-war International Style building in South Australia and finely articulates many of the key characteristics of the style, including a sleek, rectilinear, prismatic or crystalline form; reinforced concrete frame; cantilevered floors; and an elegant light-weight curtain wall. The curtain wall features grey-tinted glazing, anodised aluminium spandrels and distinctive anodised aluminium 'I'-beam mullions that span vertically between the floors. The design of Ferrari House (former Eagle Star Insurance building) was inspired by the work of Mies van der Rohe and has been recognised by the SA Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects as a 'neoclassical refinement of Miesian philosophy – less is more.'

RELEVANT CRITERIA (under section 16 of the Heritage Places Act 1993)

(d) it is an outstanding representative of a particular class of place of cultural significance

The former Eagle Star Insurance building is a notable example of an Adelaide office building and in particular, represents the phase of modern commercial building that irrevocably changed the city's skyline between 1955 to c1970.

Originally constructed to provide insurance services, the former Eagle Star Insurance building has associations with the development of the financial services sector in South Australia, and has represented a number of commercial uses since its construction in 1968. While the internal spaces have been adapted and modified for other uses, including legal offices, a beauty school, shop and dental suite, the quality of the external fabric is considered to be exceptional.

Ferrari House (former Eagle Star Insurance building) is an outstanding example of the modern, curtain-wall, commercial buildings that transformed the city's skyline during the 1950s and 1960s. Unlike the earlier traditional commercial buildings constructed in the city such as the T&G building (1925), Mayfair Hotel (former CML 1936) and State Bank (former Savings Bank of South Australia 1943) SHP 13384, these new sleek high-rise curtain-wall, commercial buildings such as Eagle Star Insurance, Reserve Bank SHP 16170 and Beacon House (former MLC) SHP 13596 pronounced the shift towards modernism in terms of both design and the use of materials and construction techniques.

Of particular note is the distinctive built form and volume, and light-weight crystalline curtain wall, hung from the edge of the cantilevered concrete floors and composed from grey-tinted glass and anodised aluminium frames, spandrels and 'I'-beam mullions that typifies the class. It is these features that makes Ferrari House (former Eagle Star Insurance building) a notable example of the curtain wall commercial buildings constructed during an important period of architectural transition in the city of Adelaide (1955-c1970).

(e) it demonstrates a high degree of creative, aesthetic or technical accomplishment or is an outstanding representative of particular construction techniques or design characteristics

Ferrari House (former Eagle Star Insurance building) constructed in 1967-1968 is an outstanding example of a Post-war International Style building in South Australia. The building finely articulates many of the key characteristics of the style, including a sleek, rectilinear, prismatic or crystalline form; reinforced concrete frame; cantilevered floors; and an elegant light-weight curtain wall composed from anodised aluminium and grey-tinted glass cladding. The built form and curtain wall, which exhibits grey-tinted glazing, aluminium spandrels and distinctive aluminium 'I'-beam mullions that span vertically between the floors is inspired by

the work of Mies van der Rohe and in particular his design for the Seagram building in New York.

The built form and curtain wall retain a high degree of integrity, however, the interior of the building has been completely refitted. The position of the curtain wall to the shops and entrance to the foyer on the ground floor has also been slightly altered to create additional retail space. These changes have not diminished the building's ability to finely illustrate the main attributes of the Post-war International Style.

The Eagle Star Insurance building is critically recognised by the South Australian Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects as one of the top 100 twentieth century buildings in South Australia. Their commentary on the building states 'the designing architects understood the refinement of detailing demanded by the framed curtain wall office building [and it demonstrates] the neoclassical refinement of Miesian philosophy' i.e. 'less is more'.

The SA Chapter of the RAIA also noted that the Eagle Star Insurance building is a very refined example of the International Style and was the precedent for the Melbourne Office, Eagle House that was built in 1972. Eagle House in Melbourne was awarded the RAIA Award of Merit 1972 and the inaugural Alcoa of Australia Award for Architecture 1973. It is also included in the Victorian Heritage Register as 'one of the finest examples of the curtain wall phase of Australian commercial architecture'.

Susan Marsden, Paul Stark and Patricia Sumerling, who are noted South Australian historians and heritage consultants, identified the Eagle Star Insurance building in the *Heritage of the City of Adelaide* as a commercial building with 'design of superior merit' that illustrates the 'shift away from traditionalism to modernism' in the City of Adelaide in the years between 1955 to c1970.

SITE PLAN

Ferrari House (former Eagle Star Insurance Building)

28-30 Grenfell Street, Adelaide SA 5000

PLACE NO.: 14099

Ferrari House (former Eagle Star Insurance Building), 28-30 Grenfell Street Adelaide
CT5849/638, CT5849/639, CT5849/640, CT5849/641, CT5849/642, CT5849/643,
CT5849/644, CT5849/645, CT5849/646, CT5849/647, CT5849/649, CT5959/263

Legend

N ↑

[red box]   Ferrari House (former Eagle Star Insurance Building)

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COMMENTARY ON THE LISTING

Description and notes with respect to a place entered in the South Australian Heritage Register in accordance with the *Heritage Places Act 1993*

Physical Description

Ferrari House (former Eagle Star Insurance building) is a Post-war International style commercial building that opened in 1968. The style of the building is strongly influenced by Mies van der Rohe's 1950s buildings and, in particular, the Seagram Building (1954-1958) located in New York.

Ferrari House is comprised of nine levels including a basement, ground floor and seven stories above. The building features a reinforced-concrete frame, cantilevered concrete-slab floors and an anodised-aluminium and grey-tinted-glass curtain wall that is 'hung' from the edge of the floors. The curtain wall is composed of aluminium-framed windows, aluminium spandrels and distinctive aluminium 'I'-beam mullions. The 'I'-beam mullions are created by joining two C-shape sections back-to-back.

Originally the ground floor curtain wall (to the shops and foyer) was set back behind the columns. In 1984, the foyer was reduced in size to create additional retail space in the first shop-front. Further modifications occurred at some point after 1991, when the ground floor curtain wall was repositioned to be in alignment with the columns to enlarge each of the shops. This reduced the pedestrian area at ground level that was once a feature of the building. The subsequent pedestrianisation of James Place has minimised the impact of this loss. The terrazzo finishes to the ground floor shops and foyer are original features of the building, while the ceramic-tile cladding to the ground floor concrete columns is more recent.

The interior of the building has also been completely refitted twice, with the exception of the staircase balustrading, and retains none of the original features that were identified in 1968 in *Architecture and Building* as being of note. (See history for further information about the original interior features of the building.) The first refit took place in 1984 and a second refit has taken place progressively over a number of years and began in c2002. The latest refit includes a new shop space in addition to the shop fronts on the ground floor, new office spaces, a dental suite and a beauty school.

Extent of Listing:

The elements with heritage significance include:

- Built form and volume of the building
- Curtain wall including grey-tinted glazing, anodised aluminium window frames, spandrels and 'I'-beam mullions
- Terrazzo finishes to ground floor shops and foyer

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The elements excluded from the heritage listing include:

- Interior offices, school, dental and shop fit-outs, elevators and plant

History of the Place

Within a few years of the establishment of South Australia there were calls by members of the public for the establishment of a local insurance company.[1] In December 1838 a prospectus for a joint stock insurance company was advertised in the *South Australian Register* and called for investors to purchase 3000 shares at £50 per share.[2] By May 1840, a third of the required sum had been subscribed and the South Australian Insurance Company began operation on 1 June 1840.[3] The first report of the Directors, delivered at the first annual general meeting held in July 1841, noted the sale of marine, fire and life assurance policies.[4]

From these small beginnings, the South Australian Insurance Company was joined by overseas companies as well as the establishment of further local companies.[5] By 1864 there were 23 insurance companies listed in the Sand & McDougall Directory, including Eagle Life Assurance Company a forerunner of Eagle Star Insurance. By 1900, 74 insurance companies were listed in the Directory and in 1916, when the last separate list to be included in the Directory was published, there were 81 insurance companies included in it.[6]

Eagle Star Insurance Company

Eagle Star Insurance Company is a British insurance company that was founded in 1904 by Edward Mountain (later Sir Edward) and was originally known as the British Dominions Marine Insurance Company. In 1916, Edward purchased three British Insurance companies – the Eagle, the Star and the Sceptre – and shortly after changed the name of his company to the Eagle Star and British Dominions Insurance Company. While the company originally specialised in marine insurance it was known for pioneering 'all-in' household insurance and for creating a department staffed entirely by women to offer services to female customers.[7]

In 1937, the company changed its name to Eagle Star Insurance Company. Directorship and management was retained by the Mountain family throughout most of the twentieth century, with Sir Edward's son and then grandson taking over respectively in 1948 and 1974. In the early 1980s, Sir Denis (grandson) successfully thwarted a takeover bid by Allianz Insurance Company.[8] However, Eagle Star later became a subsidiary of Swiss Zurich Insurance, while the Australian branch of the company was acquired by QBE Insurance in the early 1990s.[9]

Eagle Star in South Australia

Arrangements to open a branch of Eagle Star and British Dominions Insurance in South Australia commenced in 1919, when company Manager Mr Kennedy visited Adelaide.[10] A branch opened in the following year and operated from Australasia Chambers on King William Street. South Australian directors were AW Duncan, JW Grasby, WA Sneyd and AJ Walkley, while Rees & Brownsworth were appointed

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managing agents and attorneys. The company's global assets at that time amounted to more than £17 million.[11]

In the late 1960s, Eagle Star commissioned Melbourne-based architectural firm Yuncken Freeman Architects Pty Ltd in association with Adelaide-based firm Berry Gilbert and Polomka to design its first purpose-built office in Australia. Located on the corner of Grenfell Street and James Place, the job was Berry Gilbert and Polomka's first $1 million commission. The building was constructed by AV Jennings Industries (Aust) Ltd,[12] and was officially opened by Premier Steele Hall on 26 September 1968.[13]

The Eagle Star building was influenced by Mies van der Rohe's design for the Seagram Building in New York (1954-1958) and followed his tenet of 'less is more'. The Seagram Building is Mies' most well-known commercial building and embodies the culmination of the International Style in the years after World War Two. It is set in a large plaza and is 39 stories high. The ground floor is set back behind the columns of its frame while the 38 floors above are enclosed in an amber-glass curtain wall with extruded bronze I-beam mullions and Muntz metal (a copper alloy) spandrels. The I-beam mullions are a distinctive feature of the building and when combined with the narrow proportioning of the glazing adds to the building's sense of verticality.[14]

Seagram Building, New York

Detail of the curtain wall of the Seagram building note the I-beam mullions

Source: *American Buildings and their Architects*, p.266.

Unlike the Seagram Building which is set back in a large plaza, the Eagle Star Insurance building had to make the most of the small confines of the land parcel and was designed to maximise lettable office space. To achieve that end, Yuncken Freeman Architects designed the building with a reinforced concrete structure, cantilevered concrete slab floors and curtain walls to both Grenfell Street and James Place. The frame was set back from the façade to eliminate the need for perimeter beams and the anodised-aluminium-framed and grey-tinted-glazed curtain wall was hung from

the edge of the floors. The thinness of the curtain walling maximised the useable internal floor space.[15]

The ground floor was set back to create additional pedestrian space at street level. An entrance foyer provided access to the offices above and fronted Grenfell Street, while four shops fronted James Place.[16] A life-size steel sculpture of an eagle by Czechoslovakian-born and Melbourne-based artist Belo Angyal graced the foyer.[17]

At the time of its construction, the interior of the building featured a new ceiling and lighting system and an innovative new air-conditioning system. Eagle Star Insurance was the first building in South Australia to feature the ceiling and lighting system that incorporated flush fitting fluorescent lights fitted into a vinyl-coated metal pan to form a continuous run across the ceiling. Traditional vents were not used to provide the conditioned air, instead it was pumped through a narrow grid located between the ceiling tiles and the return air was taken through the light fittings, the ceiling space acted as the return vent.[18]

In the early 1970s, Yuncken Freeman Architects designed a larger but similar structure for Eagle Star Insurance's Melbourne Office. The Melbourne Office, known as Eagle House, also features an aluminium and glazed curtain wall. Unlike the Adelaide Eagle Star Insurance building, the curtain wall of the Melbourne building is flush and features green-tinted glazing. Eagle House was awarded the RAIA Award of Merit in 1972 'as one of the most elegant and attractive office buildings in Australia' and the inaugural Alcoa Australia Award for aluminium use in 1973. It is entered on the Victorian Heritage Register as an architecturally significant building and is considered as one of the 'finest examples of the curtain wall phase of Australian commercial architecture'.[19]

The SA Chapter of the RAIA identified Eagle Star Insurance building in its top 100 Significant Twentieth Century Architecture Register, stating 'the designing Architect understood the refinement of detailing demanded by the framed, curtain wall office building. Compared with contemporary Adelaide office buildings, it demonstrated the neoclassical refinement of Miesian philosophy'.

Chronology

1807	Eagle Insurance Company is established in London after a meeting in Cole's Coffee House. (Later acquired by British Dominions Insurance Company to become part of Eagle Star Insurance Company).
1839	English and Scottish Law Insurance Company founded in the UK, later acquired by British Dominions Insurance Company to become a part of Eagle Star Insurance Company.
1840	South Australian Insurance Company is formed. It is the first insurance company to be formed in South Australia and sells marine, fire and life assurance policies.
1843	Star Insurance Company Founded in the UK, later acquired by British Dominions Insurance Company to become a part of Eagle Star Insurance Company.

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1864	The Sceptre Insurance Company founded in the UK, later acquired by British Dominions Insurance Company to become a part of Eagle Star Insurance Company.
1920	Eagle Star and British Dominions Insurance company establishes their first Adelaide office in the Australasian Chambers on King William Street.
1922	Eagle Star Insurance Company founder Edward Mountain is given a Baronetcy and becomes Sir Edward.
1937	**Eagle Star and British Dominions Insurance company changes its name to Eagle Star Insurance Company.**
1953	Savings Bank of South Australia located on Hindley Street and designed by Caradoc Aston Fisher Woodhead Beaumont Smith is the first building in Australia to achieve the form of a crystalline skyscraper. Due to building delays it is not constructed until 1958.
1955	Beacon House (former MLC building) opens in Victoria Square – the first International Style building to be constructed in Adelaide.
1955-1970	A building 'bonanza' occurs in the city of Adelaide and a number of new commercial buildings are constructed.
1968	**Eagle Star Insurance Company opens its first purpose-built office in South Australia. The building is designed by Melbourne-firm Yuncken Freeman in the Post-war International style and is officially opened by Premier Steele Hall on 26 September.**
1984	Interior refit and curtain wall to shop fronts and foyer repositioned.
1992	**QBE Insurance group acquire the Australian portion of Eagle Star Insurance.**
c.2002-2019	Progressive refit begins on interior of Ferrari House (former Eagle Star Insurance building). The building is occupied by multiple tenants and has multiple uses including offices, dental suite, shops and beauty school.

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'South Australian Insurance Company', *Southern Australian* 12 May 1840, p.3.

'First Annual General Meeting of the South Australian Fire, Life and Marin Insurance Company', *Southern Australian* 20 July 1841, p.3.

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Ferrari House (former Eagle Star Insurance Building)   **PLACE NO.: 14099**

28-30 Grenfell Street, Adelaide SA 5000

FORMER NAME:	Eagle Star Insurance building
DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:	Post-war International Style curtain wall commercial building
DATE OF COMPLETION:	1968
REGISTER STATUS:	Nominated 27 September 2018
	Provisionally Entered 1 August 2019
CURRENT USE:	Legal offices, dental suite, beauty school, shops
	Unknown - present
PREVIOUS USE(S):	Insurance company offices & shops
	1968 - unknown
ARCHITECT:	Yuncken Freeman Architects Pty Ltd in association with Berry, Gilbert & Polomka
	1967-1968
BUILDER:	AV Jennings Industries (Aust) Ltd
	1967-1968
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:	Adelaide

LOCATION:	**Street No.:**	28-30
	Street Name:	Grenfell Street
	Town/Suburb:	Adelaide
	Post Code:	5000
LAND DESCRIPTION:	**Title Reference:**	CT5849/638 Lot 1 Community Strata Plan 20905
	Title Reference:	CT5849/639 Lot 2 Community Strata Plan 20905
	Title Reference:	CT5849/640 Lot 3 Community Strata Plan 20905
	Title Reference:	CT5849/641 Lot 4 Community Strata Plan 20905
	Title Reference:	CT5849/642 Lot 5 Community Strata Plan 20905

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Title Reference:	CT5849/643 Lot 6 Community Strata Plan 20905
Title Reference:	CT5849/644 Lot 7 Community Strata Plan 20905
Title Reference:	CT5849/645 Lot 8 Community Strata Plan 20905
Title Reference:	CT5849/646 Lot 9 Community Strata Plan 20905
Title Reference:	CT5849/647 Lot 10 Community Strata Plan 20905
Title Reference:	CT5849/649 Lot CP Community Strata Plan 20905
Title Reference:	CT5959/263 Lot 11 Community Strata Plan 20905
Hundred:	Adelaide

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PHOTOS

Ferrari House (former Eagle Star Insurance Building)   **PLACE NO.: 14099**

28-30 Grenfell Street, Adelaide SA 5000

Ferrari House (former Eagle Star Insurance building 1968), 2019

Source: DEW Files 2019

Ferrari House (former Eagle Star Insurance Building) Grenfell St frontage

Source: DEW Files 23 May 2019

Shop-fronts to James Place (note alignment of curtain wall with columns)

Source: DEW Files 23 May 2019

Shop-front to James Place – note original location of curtain wall behind column (this shop front only)

Source: DEW Files 23 May 2019

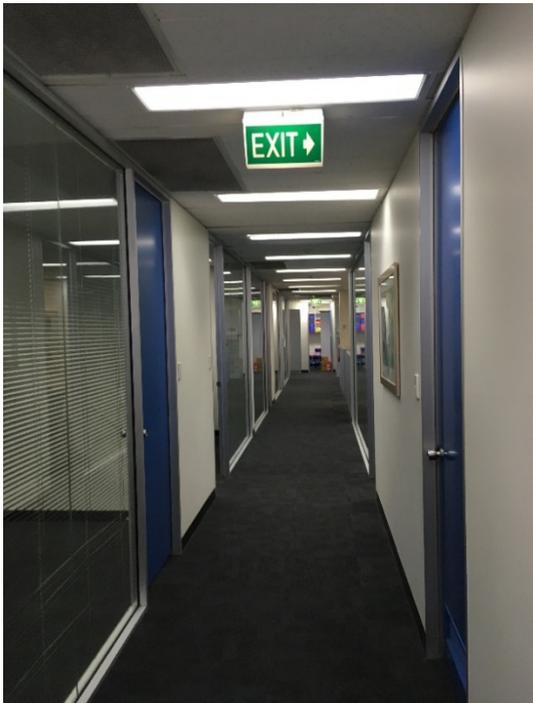**Foyer entrance on Grenfell Street**

DEW Files 23 May 2019

Detail of curtain wall

Source: DEW Files 23 May 2019

Detail showing formation of 'I' beam, window frame and spandrel

Source: DEW Files 23 May 2019

Example of new interior fit-out for legal offices
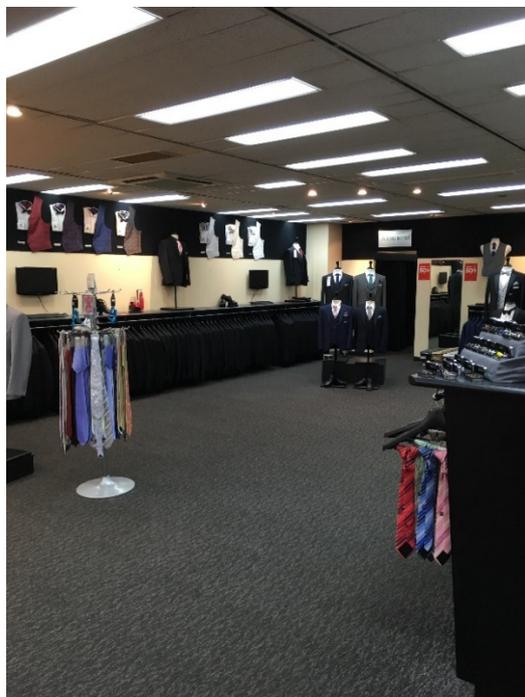
Source: Dew Files 23 May 2019

Example of new interior fit-out for dental suite

Source: Dew Files 23 May 2019

Example of new interior fit-out for beauty school

Source: Dew Files 23 May 2019

Example of new interior fit-out for shop

Source: Dew Files 23 May 2019

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1 'To the Editor of the South Australia', *Southern Australian* 19 December 1839, p.4.

2 'Prospectus of a Joint Stock Insurance Company', *South Australian Register* 28 December 1839, p.1.

3 'South Australian Insurance Company', *Southern Australian* 12 May 1840, p.3.

4 'First Annual General Meeting of the South Australian Fire, Life and Marin Insurance Company', *Southern Australian* 20 July 1841, p.3.

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13 'Eagle Star's New $1m Office Block Asset to City', *The Advertiser* 26 September 1968.

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15 'New Office Block for Eagle Star Insurance Co Ltd', *Building and Architecture* February/March 1969, pp.39-40.

16 'New Office Bloc', p.40.

17 'Eagle Star's New $1m Office Block Asset to City', *The Advertiser* 26 September 1968.

18 'New office Block', p.40.

19 'Eagle House', http://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/4698 [accessed 16 May 2019].