BETTER HERITAGE INFORMATION
SUMMARY OF STATE HERITAGE PLACE

COMMENTARY ON THE LISTING
Description and notes with respect to a place entered in the South Australian Heritage Register in accordance with either the *South Australian Heritage Act 1978* or the *Heritage Places Act 1993*.

The information contained in this document is provided in accordance with s14(6) of the *Heritage Places Act 1993*.

NAME: Torrens Building   **PLACE NO.:** 10895

KNOWN AS: Torrens Building

ADDRESS: Kaurna Country

202-220 Victoria Square

Adelaide SA 5000

Hundred of Adelaide

CT 5896/686 D27841 A5

CONFIRMED IN THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE REGISTER:

28 May 1981

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Built 1877-1881, the Torrens Building is an outstanding example of Victorian Free Classical architecture in South Australia. Designed by Michael Egan, with modifications by South Australian Architect-in-Chief John Woods, the building demonstrates key attributes of the style, including unusual fenestration, decorative accents such as the urns and coat of arms, and the unconventional order of architecture through the combination of Tuscan, Roman Doric and Ionic elements.

Purpose-built to house several government departments, notably the Commissioner of Public Works, Registrar General and Water Works, the Torrens Building is directly associated with the expansion of the colony and its administration in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

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

(a) it demonstrates important aspects of the evolution or pattern of the State's history

Designed by Michael Egan in 1877 and completed in 1881 with modifications by the South Australian Architect-in-Chief John Woods, the Torrens Building is associated with the expansion of the colony and its administration in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The building was constructed to house the expanding public service, and was purpose built for several government departments, namely the Public Works, Registrar-General's, Architect-in-Chief, and Water Works. As one of the largest buildings constructed in Adelaide in the late Victorian era, it was used by the government as a public administration building continuously for 112 years, over that time becoming an important part of the city's townscape.

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

The Torrens Building is an outstanding example of Victorian Free Classical architecture in South Australia as it demonstrates many of the key attributes of the style and remains highly intact.

Victorian Free Classical combines a wide variety of classical forms and expressions. The key characteristics of Victorian Free Classical design found on the Torrens Building include:

- Unconventional order of architecture with the use of Tuscan and Roman Doric on the first floor, and Ionic on the second,
- Symmetrical façade and harmonic proportions,
- Use of more durable materials, predominantly brick and stone,
- Unusual fenestration,
- Parapet concealing roof,
- Decorative accents on the skyline such as the urns and coat-of-arms,
- The combination of Palladian and Colosseum motifs,
- Unconventional intercolumniation,
- Use of a variety of pediments,
- Secondary facades of rendered masonry.

The design of the Torrens Building was the product of a deliberate move away from high maintenance, rendered public buildings such as the former South Australian Institute, to the use of higher quality brick and stone. Other examples of Victorian Free Classical architecture in Adelaide, designed to a similar level of accomplishment

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include the Town Hall (SHP 10859), General Post Office (SHP 10860) and Treasury Building (SHP 10857).

(g) it has a special association with the life or work of a person or organisation or an event of historical importance

The Torrens Building was a public administration building purposefully designed for several Government departments, most prominently the Public Works Department, Engineering & Water Supply Department (once known as the Waterworks & Drainage Commission), Lands Titles Office and the Registrar-General's Department.

The Torrens Building originally known as the New Government Offices was specifically designed to accommodate the Lands Titles Office. It was from the Torrens Building that the Lands Titles Office administered the Torrens Title system for over a century, a system that rejected the slow, expensive and insecure transfer of land through deeds for a standardised process of grant certificates. Notable features to serve the office's needs include the strong room for securing records and documents, and draftsmen's rooms. In 1912, another strongroom was built in the basement of the building as the department expanded, the addition requiring heavy steel shutters to be installed on three of the central courtyard windows. Another fire-proof room was created in the north wing of the ground floor in 1935. In the 1970s, the building was renamed the Torrens Building further demonstrating the department's enduring and special association with it.

The Torrens Building also has a special association with the Engineering & Water Supply Department. Initially known as the Waterworks & Drainage Commission the department was responsible for implementing a reticulated water supply and sewage system in the fledgling colony. In 1881, deep drainage commenced, Adelaide becoming the first city in Australia to use a water-based sewerage system. The Department operated out of the Torrens Building from 1881 until 1967 and for many years it was known by the public as the E&WS Building.

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SITE PLAN

Torrens Building   **PLACE NO.: 10895**

202-220 Victoria Square, Adelaide SA 5000

Torrens Building, 202-220 Victoria Square, Adelaide SA 5000
(CT 5896/686 D27841 A5, Hundred of Adelaide)

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LEGEND

■ Parcel boundaries (Indicates extent of Listing)
■ Existing State Heritage Place(s)
■ Outline of Elements of Significance for State Heritage Place

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Physical Description

Designed in the Victorian Free Classical style, the Torrens Building is a two-storey Melbourne bluestone and Sydney sandstone building featuring a large central courtyard. It has a corrugated-iron-clad hipped roof hidden behind a carved stone balustrade-style parapet featuring urns spaced at regular intervals. The frontage to Victoria Square features a three-storey central bay surmounted by a solid parapet and concrete cast of the British Coat of Arms (twentieth century addition to original plans). There is an extensive basement beneath the northern, southern, and western wings of the building.

The western and southern elevations are a symmetrical composition. The western façade is made from Sydney sandstone, with entrances at either end and within the central bay, while the southern façade is made from Melbourne bluestone. Both feature:

- embedded Ionic columns and pilasters to ground storey and embedded Doric columns and pilasters to first storey,
- arched windows with decorated, wedge-shaped keystones to ground storey, contrasting rectangular windows with a mix of straight, segmental and pointed pediments to first storey,
- floral motif in sandstone between each window (ground storey),
- balustrade-style parapet with dentils beneath, and capped solid stone piers surmounted by urns,
- Roman Doric entablature on all stories, with a triglyph frieze and circular vents evenly spaced across the façade in a row between each level,
- stone vents featuring a leaf-motif under first storey windows,
- arched vents to basement at street level.

The main entrance to the building is located in the three-storey central bay to the western façade and has been created by converting the Palladian motif window. This part of the façade also features lions head motifs to the second storey. The entrance is accessed via a flight of semi-circular stairs with symmetrical ramps to either side.

The eastern and northern elevations are constructed of rendered brick. Some features of the western façade continue around onto the northern elevation, such as the arched windows to the ground storey and rectangular to the second, and the Roman Doric pilasters and entablature with triglyph frieze and circular vents. A solid parapet with solid stone piers surmounted by urns runs along the top of the first storey, with false windows at either end. To the eastern end of the northern elevation is a single-storey addition housing plant.

The decorative elements of the facades to the northern and southern wings of the building are continued onto the eastern elevation and includes:

- solid parapet with capped piers, Roman Doric pilasters and entablature with triglyph frieze and circular vents,
- the first storey features rectangular windows, with one rectangular steel security window on the ground storey (to north),
- vents to the basement at street level (to south),
- arched windows to the ground storey with a central arched door with fanlight above (to south).

A comparably narrower structure completes the building (to east) and features:

- three-stories constructed of rendered brick with a string-course between floors, arched windows to the ground and first stories, and rectangular windows to the second,
- two arched entry points with roundel windows above.

The elevations to internal courtyard are comprised of red brick with render to the second storey of the west wing. The windows are rectangular with concrete lintels to the windows on the first storey. Several windows and doors on the ground floor of the north wing have steel security shutters. A curved corrugated iron verandah shades the ground floor on all four sides.

Elements of Significance:

Elements of heritage significance include (but are not necessarily limited to):

- Victorian Free Classical building,
- Central courtyard,
- Internal fittings and fixtures,
- Steel security doors and windows,
- Fire proof rooms and strongrooms.

Elements not considered to contribute to significance of place include (but are not necessarily limited to):

- Single-storey addition located at the east end of the north elevation,
- Semi-circular stair and ramps to main entrance (Victoria Square).

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HISTORY OF THE PLACE

Tarntanya

The Adelaide Plains within which the city and parklands are situated are the traditional lands of the Kaurna People. Prior to settlement, the area was an open grassy plain with patches of trees and shrubs, the result of hundreds of generations of skilful land management.[1] Around 300 Kaurna resided in the area, living close to the Karrawirra Pari, or the River Torrens, which was an important resource area and camping place, providing water, fish and other foods.[2] The area where the Torrens Building is located is a traditional meeting area for the Kaurna People known as Tarntanyangga.

Early Administration of the City of Adelaide

Prior to 1842, the colony of South Australia was presided over by two separate authorities, the first being the Governor, representing the British Crown, and the second being the Resident Commissioner, reporting to the Colonisation Commissioners in London. While Governor John Hindmarsh and his Legislative Council were responsible for setting up 'good government', the Resident Commissioner, James Hurtle Fisher, and his team were responsible for the physical establishment of the colony through surveying and land sales.[3]

This dual system of administration caused serious friction and hindered the initial progress of the colony. Hindmarsh's interference with Colonel William Light's choice of the capital site made him unpopular, Fisher even describing him as 'about the most unqualified man that could have been selected' for the role of Governor.[4]

In 1838, both Hindmarsh and Fisher were replaced by George Gawler, who initiated around a dozen public works schemes. Between 1839 and 1841, as Governor and Resident Commissioner, he established an infrastructure of roads and bridges, as well as authorising the construction of major government administrative buildings including the Treasury (SHP 10857), Government House (SHP 10873) and Adelaide Gaol (SHP 10937). While these developments instilled confidence in the new colony, expenditure during this period was more than four times greater than its revenue, and ultimately contributed to nearly bankrupting the colony.[5] As a result, the *South Australia Act 1842* was introduced, abolishing the Colonisation Commissioners and passing all powers to the Governor and an appointed Legislative Council of seven members nominated by the Crown.

Meanwhile, the first municipal corporation in Australia, the Adelaide City Council or the Corporation of the City of Adelaide was formed by the passage of the *City of Adelaide Municipal Corporation Act 1840*. It was formed by a special Ordinance passed by Governor Gawler and his Legislative Council in accordance with the wishes of the South Australian Colonisation Commissioners who were responsible for organising the settlement of the province.[6] The first mayor was James Hurtle Fisher,

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and the first council meeting was held on 4 November 1840.[7] Although the Corporation collapsed in 1843 due to insolvency, it was re-established in 1849 and has continued since. Responsible government formed in 1856 after the passage of the *South Australian Constitution Act 1856* and consequently, became responsible for the control of revenue and making laws.[8]

Between 1860 and 1880, the population of Adelaide doubled to 40,000,[9] resulting in a building boom that occurred between 1870 and 1882. During the building boom, the physical character of Adelaide changed considerably and many of the original buildings were replaced by structures described as 'beautiful in design, substantial in character and excellent specimens of street architecture.'[10]

The Council successfully lobbied its rate-payers for money to build a Town Hall (1866) and the City Markets (1870), while the government built the General Post Office (1867), and the Magistrates and Supreme Courts (1869).[11] In 1878, the first tramways were established, running to North Adelaide and east to Norwood, boosting development in those areas.[12] Additionally, a deep drainage system connected to all properties was constructed during this period, alleviating some of the health problems associated with overcrowding.[13]

By the mid-1870s, office space for public servants was scarce, with the public service outgrowing the Treasury Building on Victoria Square.[14] To remedy the situation, in 1876, the colonial government purchased a one-acre allotment on the corner of Wakefield Street and Victoria Square for new offices.[15] Town acre 303 had been previously owned by Dr. Charles George Everard, who selected it in the Preliminary Land Orders ballot in March 1837. It was the only acre fronting Victoria Square to be owned by a resident after initial selection and sales, all others being purchased by the government or absentee investors.[16]

New Government Offices – The Torrens Building

In March 1877, the government announced a competition calling for a new building on the corner of Victoria Square and Wakefield Street:

> The Government are inviting architects to furnish designs for the proposed new Government offices in Adelaide. The premiums offered are – For the best design, £150; and for the second best, £75.[17]

Drawings were to be delivered to the offices of the Hon. John Colton, Commissioner of Public Works by 16 July 1877,[18] while the budget for the building was not to exceed £50,000.[19] Seven submissions were received[20] and a Board of experts formed to judge the entries. The best design was awarded to Melbourne architect Michael Egan, whose square two-storey design with central courtyard was considered to be the most suitable.[21] A writer for the *South Australian Register* described Egan's proposal:

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The design is in the Italian style. The first storey is caried out in the Doric and the second in the Ionic order, the third storey being simply pilastered. The windows of the ground floor are arched, and finished with pilasters and architraves. The upper windows are square headered. The second floor windows facing Victoria Square and Wakefield Street are finished with panelled plasters, ornamental trusses, and corniced heads, some of the heads for variety being pedimented; all the remaining external windows have architraves. The parapets are finished with balustrades, and over the corners and main features, in the shape of columns and pilasters, are finished with finials and vases, the centre feature in Victoria Square being finished were the royal coat-of-arms. The design generally is simple in treatment; variety had evidently not been considered essential in giving good elevations.[22]

Egan's plans illustrated two entrances from Victoria Square beneath heavily corniced gables supported by substantial pillars with foliated caps.[23] The two faces were connected by a plain façade surmounted by a balustrade, the centre being simply marked by a niche containing a full-length statue of Her Majesty the Queen,[24] however this latter detail was never realised.

Michael Egan was a prolific architect and is well known in Victoria where he designed several major public buildings as well as bridges, roads and wharves. His design for the Government Offices in Melbourne around 1873, and extensive public portfolio of works likely contributed to his design being selected for the New Government Offices in Adelaide. In February 1877, just months before tenders for the New Government Offices closed, he won second prize for his drawings for the University of Adelaide's Mitchell Building.

First prize for the Mitchell Building was awarded to Adelaide architect James MacGeorge, however, his design proved to be an unpopular choice as it did not adhere to the competition rules. As runner-up, Egan was appointed architect, however, his ambitious plan was too expensive. The University Council and Design Committee engaged another architect, William McMinn, to carry out Egan's design, but on a smaller scale.[25]

An additional factor in favour of Egan's design for the New Government Offices was his pledge that the building could be kept within the £50,000 budget.[26] This was a controversial decision, and several other competitors expressed their frustration in local newspapers. Michael McMullen, for example, claimed in a scathing letter to the editor that,

…any one who knows only a little about cut stone work that Mr. Egan's design cannot be carried out for £30,000… If I considered I had liberty to go beyond that sum, and studied to make an attractive picture instead of a practical plan, I could with very much less trouble have copied line for line the elevations of the "Place de la Concorde" in Paris.[27]

MacGeorge, who submitted drawings for a three-storey building, argued that Egan's plans did not comply with the conditions of the competition on several specific counts, which he detailed in a letter to the editor dated 30 November 1877. He then asked for £250 to be paid to him as compensation for the time wasted on his entry.[28] His letter stated that Egan had purposefully cut the room sizes down to keep within the budget, suggesting that the design 'ought to have been at once laid aside as one to which it was impossible' calling the Board's decision reckless.[29] Nonetheless Egan's design was upheld as the winner.

In December 1877, a Treasury Bill to authorise the raising of £163,7000 was passed by the House of Assembly, with £60,000 of that to be spent on 'new Government Offices, including Real Property Offices and purchase of land.'[30]

In December 1878, more than a year after Egan's design won the competition, tenders were called for the excavation of the cellars and for the building of the foundation walls of the new government offices.[31] Newspaper articles from the period suggest the public was growing impatient with the time it was taking to erect the new offices, one enquirer blaming the delay on the selection of a Melbourne architect over 'local talent'.[32] As the foundations of the new offices were to be seven feet deep, the project was delayed until the Sewers Bill could be passed so that suitable arrangements could be made for the drainage of the structures.

Robert Huckson's tender, being the lowest at £6,649, was accepted,[33] and in January 1879 excavation works began.[34] The foundations and cellars were constructed of Glen Osmond stone. In May 1879, it was reported that Egan had completed the plans for the building, with some improvement and modifications by the Architect-in-Chief John Woods. Construction was estimated to the take at least two years, however, once complete the building would become the offices for the Public Works Department, Register-General, and the Hydraulic Engineer.[35]

By July the foundations were complete, and in November, James Shaw's tender, the lowest at £55,795 was accepted for the construction of the building.[36] The construction work was carried out under the superintendence of Woods, with Mr. Castledine acting as Clerk of Works, and Mr. D. Cameron as the Contractor's foreman.[37]

Controversy followed again in 1880 when it was announced that the new building would utilise sandstone imported from Sydney, rather than stone from Tea Tree Gully. Protectionists were outraged, arguing that the stone from Sydney was vastly inferior to that sourced locally, and that using imported labour would deprive local quarrymen of business. The contractor, Shaw, stated that he would not carry out the work with local stone for less than a £4,000 increase on his contract price. The Government asserted that Sydney stone was easier to work with, 'while any quantity of the Sydney stone could be procured at about the same price as local stone, they could get no

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guarantee that they could obtain a sufficient quantity of local stone of uniform colour and quality.'[38]

The first stone in the basement, weighing over three tonnes, was laid on 7 April 1880.[39] One newspaper reported that at times no less than 120 men were working on the structure. The final stone was laid almost a year later on 8 April 1881.[40] At the time, the building was one of the largest in the city, as Egan's original design had been altered to allow for the addition of a third story:

> It was found that if Mr. Egan's plans were adhered to the structure would present an extremely squat appearance, and so a third story of less area than the ground floor was added with a view of lightening the appearance of the offices… The design of the first story is Doric, and the second story is of the Ionic order of architecture, the third story being a composition style.[41]

An additional £10,730 was needed to complete the offices. It was reasoned that the original seven-foot foundations were 'undesirable', and it 'was thought wise to make a basement story to render the superstructure secure.'[42] The final cost of the building on completion was close to £70,000.[43]

Certain elements of the building's design stood out to reporters, who enthusiastically followed the construction process. They were impressed by the design of the strongrooms which were described by one journalist as 'impregnable.'[44] However, the most unique and fascinating element of the building was the 50-foot tower located in the centre of the courtyard, which served as a ventilation tower for the building's toilet facilities:

> A noticeable feature in the design is the water-closets in the courtyard. These are to be ventilated by means of a campanile 3 ft. 6 in. square inside, rising the full height of the building, and forming a ventilator to the whole of the closets. The top will be finished with a Bannerman's patent cowl.[45]

Government departments began moving into the offices in December, and initially included the Minister of Public Works, the Public Works Department, the Registrar General, the Architect-in-Chief and his Department, the Engineer-in-Chief and Hydraulic Engineering Staff, and the Water Works Department.

In 1958, a plaque commemorating the centenary of the *Real Property Act 1857-8* and in honour of Sir Richard Torrens was unveiled on the western elevation of the building. The Torrens Title system administered under the Act standardised the process of the transfer of land, replacing deeds with certificates that were surrendered on sale of a property before a new grant was issued. This statute remains in force in South Australia and was administered by the Registrar-General's Department from the Torrens Building for over 100 years.

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In 1967, the central courtyard tower and water closet was demolished. Known affectionately as the 'Taj Mahal' by employees, it was replaced with a modern toilet block.[46] Several chimneys have also been removed as part of a re-roofing programme, which also altered the buildings ventilation ridge. In the 1970s there was a push for the building's demolition, as its occupants were leaving for more expansive, department specific offices. A multi-storey office block was endorsed by Adelaide City Planners. However, the building was inscribed on the Register of National Estate in 1978 and then in 1981, it was entered in the South Australian Heritage Register as a State Heritage Place.

The building was used continuously by the Government as an administrative centre until 1993, when the final component of the Lands Titles Office moved out. Over the years the building was known by many names, the most notable being the E&WS Building. In 1979, twelve years after the Engineering and Water Supply Department vacated the premises, the building was renamed the Torrens Building after Sir Robert Richard Torrens and his revolutionary Torrens Title System.

The Torrens Building closed in 1993 for restoration, including the addition of the royal coat of arms, reopening to great fanfare in September 1997. Since reopening, the Torrens Building has been a university campus for Carnegie Mellon University's Heinz College (2006), the first foreign university in Australia and then British Cranfield University (2007-2010).[47] In 2013, Torrens University opened its first campus in the Torrens Building, before moving to a campus further east along Wakefield Street in 2015. The Torrens Building currently houses public and private sector offices under the ownership of the Minister for Administrative Services.

CHRONOLOGY

Year	Event
1838	George Gawler takes over as Governor and Resident Commissioner of the colony of South Australia.
1840	In August, the Corporation of the City of Adelaide is formed by Governor Gawler and the Legislative Council with the first meeting of the council held on 4 November.
1842	The *South Australia Act* is introduced passing all powers to the Governor and his Legislative Council.
1843	The Adelaide Corporation is declared insolvent.
1849	Governor Young sets up a City Commission.
1852	The City Commission is replaced by a reinvigorated City Corporation.

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1856   The *South Australian Constitution Act* is assented to in June, allowing all male residents over the age of 21 to vote in elections, irrespective of property ownership.

1861   The City Corporation abolished the position of alderman, allowing citizens to directly elect Adelaide's mayor.

1866   The Town Hall is built (SHP 10859).

1869   The Magistrates Court and the Supreme Court are constructed.

1873   Michael Egan, a Melbourne-based architect, designs the State Government Offices in Melbourne.

1876   South Australian Government purchases an entire town acre on the corner of Victoria Square and Wakefield Street.

1877   In March, the colonial government announces a competition calling for the submission of tenders for the design for a new building on the corner of Victoria Square and Wakefield Street.

        Michael Egan's design for the New Government Offices in Adelaide wins first place.

        A Treasury Bill to authorise the raising of £163,000 is passed by the House of Assembly.

1878   Excavations for the basement and foundations completed by Robert Huckson.

1879   In May, Egan completes the final plans for the New Government Building.

        In November, James Shaw's tender is accepted for the construction of the building.

1880   A public meeting is held on 10 February at the Traveller's Rest Inn, Houghton, to consider the use of Sydney sandstone in the construction of the new Government Offices. 45 people were in attendance.

1881   Revenue of the City Corporation is reported to be an estimated £51,000.

1880   First stone of the New Government Offices laid on 7 April.

1881   Construction begins on the New Government Offices.

1881   Tender of A. Simpson & Son accepted in April for the strong-room doors at a cost of £329 10s 6d.[48]

1881   Construction on the New Government Offices is completed in April.

1912   A new strongroom is built in the basement for use by the Land Titles Office of the Register-Generals Department. Steel shutters were added to three windows in the central courtyard.

1930s **The verandah is removed from the north, west, and south sides of the courtyard and lawn is planted.**

1932 **A fire-proof room was created in the Lands Titles Office of the Registrar-Generals Department.**

1949 **A small women's toilet is installed under the secondary stair on the ground floor, adjacent to the north-west corner of the courtyard.**

1967 **The central courtyard tower and water closet are demolished.**

The Engineering and Water Supply Department move out of the building.

1978 **The Building is added to the Register of the National Estate.**

1979 The Building is renamed the Torrens Building after Sir Robert Richard Torrens.

1981 **The Torrens Building is entered in the South Australian Heritage Register as a State Heritage Place.**

1993 **After 112 year of continuous government occupation, the Torrens Building is closed for restoration.**

1997 **The Torrens Building reopens.**

2006 – c. 2022 A campus of Carnegie Mellon University Heinz College operates from the Torrens Building.

2007 – 2010 A campus of British Cranfield University operates from the Torrens Building.

2009 – c. 2018 University College London opens a campus in the Torrens Building for its School of Energy and Resources.

2013 – 2015 Torrens University opens its first campus in the building in 2013.

2023 Conservation works to the southern and western façade (DA 020/V246/22).

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Cartographic Materials

Plan of the City of Adelaide in South Australia [cartographic material] surveyed and drawn by Colonel Light, c.1837, State Library of South Australia, archival map/chart, C856.

BHI Summary of State Heritage Place: 10895   16 of 28
Confirmed in the South Australian Heritage Register on 28 May 1981
The South Australian Heritage Council endorsed the content of this BHI - SSHP on 19 October 2023.

SITE DETAILS

Torrens Building   **PLACE NO.: 10895**

202-220 Victoria Square, Adelaide SA 5000

FORMER NAME:	New Government Offices, E&WS Building.
DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:	Large two-storey masonry building, with substantial basement designed in the Victorian Free Classical style with a Palladian composition, and three-storey central bay.
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION:	1880 - 1881
REGISTER STATUS:	Confirmed 28 May 1981
CURRENT USE:	Public and private sector offices c. 2021-
PREVIOUS USE(S):	Government administration offices 1881 - 1993 Various university campuses 2006 - c. 2021
ARCHITECT:	Michael Egan (plans modified by John Woods) 1877
BUILDER:	James Shaw 1879 - 1881
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:	Adelaide

LOCATION:	**Street No.:**	202-220
	Street Name:	Victoria Square
	Town/Suburb:	Adelaide
	Post Code:	5000
LAND DESCRIPTION:	**Title Reference:**	CT 5896/686 D27841 A5
	Hundred:	Adelaide

PHOTOS

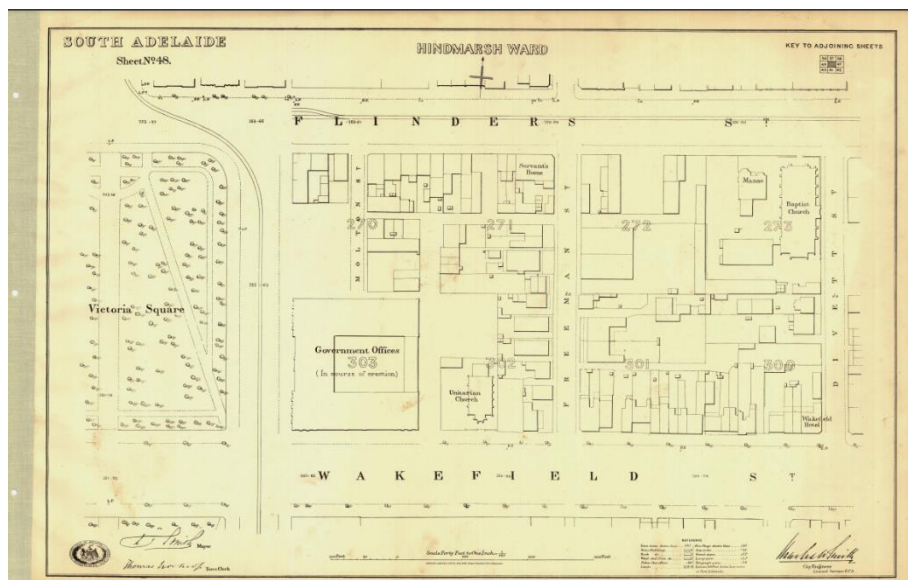**Torrens Building**   **PLACE NO.: 10895**

202-220 Victoria Square, Adelaide SA 5000

The Torrens Building in Victoria Square c.1883.

Source: SLSA PRG 280/1/5/101

Plan of the Hindmarsh Ward from the Smith survey in 1880. The Government Offices (Torrens Building) are noted as in course of erection.

Source: SLSA Map 1389015

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Victoria Square looking north c.1879. The empty site of the future Torrens Building can be seen on the right.

Source: SLSA PRG 280/1/5/101

The Torrens Building from the tower at the General Post Office c.1897.

Source: SLSA B1450

BHI Summary of State Heritage Place: 10895   19 of 28
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West elevation of the Torrens Building.

Source: Open House Adelaide

Southern elevation of the Torrens Building in 2011.

Source: DEW Files, 15 Feb 2011

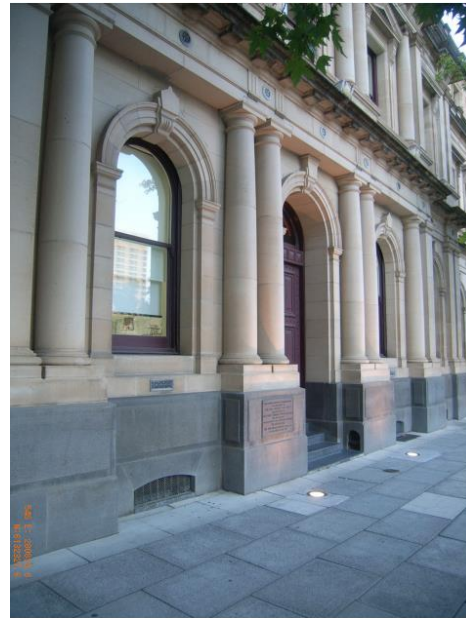BHI Summary of State Heritage Place: 10895   20 of 28
Confirmed in the South Australian Heritage Register on 28 May 1981
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2023.

Central door opening to west elevation showing steps.

Detail of west elevation. Note the Doric columns and arched windows.

Source: DEW Files, 16 Feb 2011

First floor windows to southern elevation.

Detail of entablature on the western elevation.

Source: DEW Files, 16 Feb 2011

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Central courtyard from the east.

Source: DEW Files, 10 Feb 2011

Honour board in the west wing.

Source: DEW Files, 10 Feb 2011

BHI Summary of State Heritage Place: 10895   22 of 28
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South-west stair view from ground floor.

Source: DEW Files, 10 Feb 2011

First floor corridor of north wing.

Central foyer added in the 1990s.

Central basement corridor to south wing looking east.

Source: DEW Files, 10 Feb 2011

BHI Summary of State Heritage Place: 10895   23 of 28
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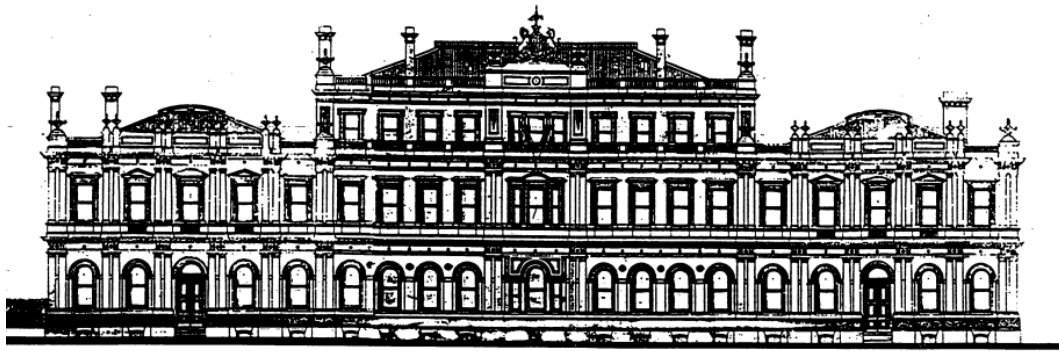**Strong room door at the east end of the basement.**

Source: DEW Files, 10 Feb 2011

**Steel window shutters and door security covers
installed in the early twentieth century.**

Source: DEW Files, 10 Feb 2011

BHI Summary of State Heritage Place: 10895   24 of 28
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2023.
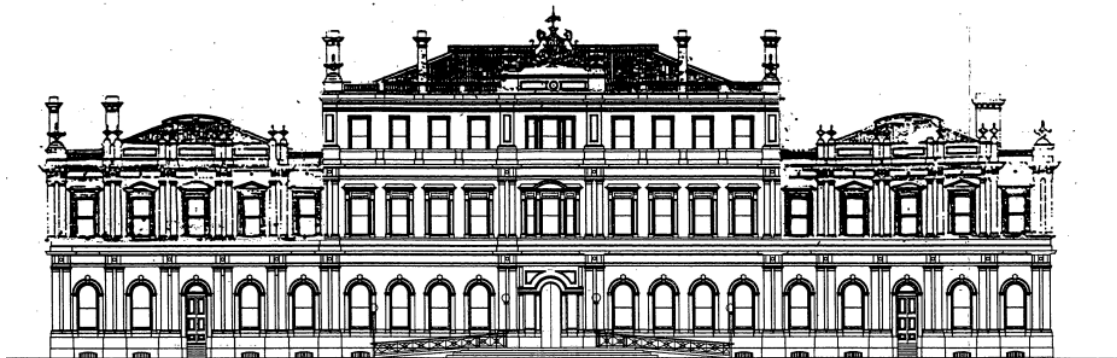
VICTORIA SQUARE ELEVATION - EXISTING

Depiction of the west elevation of the Torrens Building prior to conservation works in 1990s.

Source: DEW Files, 1989

VICTORIA SQUARE ELEVATION - PROPOSED

Depiction of the west elevation of the Torrens Building after conservation works in the 1990s.

Source: DEW Files, 1989

BHI Summary of State Heritage Place: 10895   25 of 28
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West elevation of the Torrens Building after conservation works in 2011. The British coat of arms has been added, and the centre windows on the ground floor have been modified to create a main entrance.

Source: DEW Files, 2011

Western elevation of the Torrens Building in 1948. Note the missing coat-of-arms at the top of the centre bay.

Source: SLSA B18022

BHI Summary of State Heritage Place: 10895   26 of 28
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[1] Lewis Yerloburka O'Brien and Mandy Paul, 'Kaurna People,' SA History Hub, History Trust of South Australia, https://sahistoryhub.history.sa.gov.au/subjects/kaurna-people, accessed 5 October 2023.

[2] Lewis Yerloburka O'Brien and Mandy Paul, 'Kaurna People.'

[3] McDougall & Vines, 'Adelaide: an overview history, historical themes' (August 2006), p. 85.

[4] Donald Langmead, *Accidental Architect* (Darlinghurst, N.S.W.: Crossing Press, 1994), p. 72.

[5] McDougall & Vines, 'Adelaide,' p.15.

[6] City of Adelaide Archives, 'Election of the first city council 1840,' City of Adelaide, https://www.cityofadelaide.com.au/community/creativity-culture/city-archives/archives-collection/source-sheets-reference-guides/reference-guides/election-of-the-first-city-council-1840/, accessed 21 September 2023.

[7] Corinne Ball, Migration Museum, 'Adelaide City Council,' SA History Hub, History Trust of South Australia, https://sahistoryhub.history.sa.gov.au/organisations/adelaide-city-council, accessed 21 September 2023.

[8] Paul, 'Responsible Government.'

[9] Ball, 'Adelaide City Council.'

[10] McDougall & Vines, 'Adelaide,' p. 18.

[11] Russell, 'Adelaide City Squares,' p. 40.

[12] W.A. Sinclair, 'Urban booms in the nineteenth century Australia: Melbourne and Adelaide,' *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, vol. 10, 1982, p. 5.

[13] McDougall & Vines, 'Adelaide,' p.18.

[14] Alexander Parsons, History Trust of South Australia, 'Torrens Building', SA History Hub, History Trust of South Australia, https://adelaidia.history.sa.gov.au/places/torrens-building-0, accessed 21 August 2023.

[15] *South Australian Register*, 'Miscellaneous,' 30 December, 1876, p. 8.

[16] *Land Grants Book Town Acres*, SRSA 121800/0001.

[17] *The Express and Telegraph*, 'General News,' 16 March, 1877, p. 1.

[18] *The Express and Telegraph*, 'Advertising,' 5 April 1877, p. 1.

[19] *South Australian Register*, 'Building Improvements,' 6 October 1877, p. 5.

[20] *Adelaide Observer,* 'The Week's News,' 6 October 1877, p. 5.

[21] *The South Australian Advertiser*, 'Designs for the new government offices,' 24 November 1877, p. 6.

[22] *South Australian Register*, 17 May 1878.

[23] *Evening Journal*, 'Chamber of Manufactures,' 17 November 1877, p. 2.

[24] *Evening Journal*, 'Manufactures,' p. 2.

[25] Geoffrey C. Bishop, 'McMinn, William,' Architecture Museum, University of South Australia, 2015, Architects of South Australia, https://architectsdatabase.unisa.edu.au/arch_full.asp?Arch_ID=105, accessed 21 August 2023.

[26] *South Australian Advertiser*, 24 November 1877, p. 6.

[27] *South Australian Advertiser*, 'To the editor,' 26 November 1877, p. 7.

[28] Elfrida and Rolf Jensen, *Colonial Architecture in South Australia: a definitive chronicle of developments 1836-1890 and the social history of the times* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1980), p. 610.

[29] *Express and Telegraph*, 'Designs for new public offices – to the editor,' 26 November 1877, p. 2.

[30] *South Australian Chronicle and Weekly Mail*, 'Treasury Bills Bill,' 22 December 1877, p. 6.

[31] *Express and Telegraph*, 'Advertising,' 6 December 1878, p. 4.

[32] *Evening Journal*, 'Government Offices, Victoria Square,' 28 November 1878, p. 3.

[33] *Evening Journal*, 'The South Australian Loan,' 9 January 1979, p. 2.

[34] *South Australian Advertiser*, 25 January 1879, p. 4.

[35] *Evening Journal*, 'The New Government Offices,' 1 May 1879, p. 2.

BHI Summary of State Heritage Place: 10895   27 of 28
Confirmed in the South Australian Heritage Register on 28 May 1981
The South Australian Heritage Council endorsed the content of this BHI - SSHP on 19 October 2023.

[36] *Evening Journal*, 'Latest Shipping,' 12 November 1879, p. 3.

[37] Berry Polomka Riches Gilbert Architects, 'Torrens Building Conservation Study' (South Australian Department of Housing & Construction (March, 1986), p. 7.

[38] *Express and Telegraph*, 'Stone for the new Government Offices,' 11 February 1880, p. 3.

[39] *Border Watch*, 'Telegrams,' 10 April 1880, p. 3.

[40] *South Australian Register*, 'New government offices,' 24 December 1881, p. 6.

[41] *Register*, 'New government offices,' p. 6.

[42] *South Australian Register*, 'The Parliament,' 4 November 1881, p. 1.

[43] *South Australian Register*, 'Correspondence,' 9 February 1882, p. 4.

[44] *South Australian Advertiser*, 'The New Government Offices,' 7 January 1882, p. 2.

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[46] Alexander Parsons, 'Torrens Building.'

[47] Alexander Parsons, 'Torrens Building.'

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BHI Summary of State Heritage Place: 10895   28 of 28
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