Commonwealth Offices, 4 Treasury Place, Melbourne, Victoria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finance ID Number</th>
<th>DFD-61020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commonwealth Heritage List (CHL) Place ID Number</strong></td>
<td>Commonwealth Offices: <a href="#">105453</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current Status (including CHL Place ID Number)</strong></td>
<td>The Commonwealth Offices building is included on the Commonwealth Heritage List (<a href="#">CHL Place ID 105453</a>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ownership</strong></td>
<td>The Commonwealth Offices is managed by the Department of Finance on behalf of the Commonwealth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
<td>The Commonwealth Offices are located at 4 Treasury Place, Melbourne, Victoria. The property is located east of the Melbourne city centre near State Parliament House and overlooks Treasury and Fitzroy Gardens. The site is bounded by Treasury Place to the south and St Andrew's Place to the north. To the west is the Department of Agriculture building (3 Treasury Place) and to the east is a small triangular park, which was previously part of the roadway and now separates the site from Lansdowne Street. The site is situated on the side of a hill that slopes down from...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
St Andrews Place to Treasury Place.

The Commonwealth Offices is the only Commonwealth owned building on Treasury Place next to the Victorian State Government Treasury Reserve Precinct. Due to its Commonwealth ownership, the site is not officially recognised as part of the State government Treasury Reserve Precinct. However, historically, functionally and aesthetically, Commonwealth Offices is very closely related to the other buildings included in the Precinct.

The Commonwealth Offices are located at 4 Treasury Place, Melbourne Victoria.
Source: Godden Mackay Logan, 2014 via Google maps.

Description

The Commonwealth Offices building is a six-storey, Edwardian Baroque, purpose-designed government office building, clearly designed to be seen in the round. It was designed by the first Commonwealth Government Architect, John Smith Murdoch and was constructed between 1911 and 1913 to house the administrative offices of the new Commonwealth Government prior to the opening of the Federal Parliament in Canberra in 1927.

The view of the newly constructed Commonwealth Offices south block c1914.
Source: State Library South Australia
**Configuration**

The Commonwealth Offices building is a T-shaped building consisting of two interconnecting blocks. The south block, which provides the main entrance to the building off Treasury Place, runs east–west parallel to Treasury Place. The north block, which is perpendicular to the south block, extends northwards on the central north–south axis of the south block. It is cruciform in plan with two shorter wings extending to the east and the west. The north and south blocks are connected by a narrow link element, which clearly separates the two blocks. The building has several secondary entries in its eastern and western facades, not all of which are still functional. The courtyard adjacent the link between the two blocks provides a small tertiary entrance for disabled access.

**Exterior**

The building adopts many of the decorative elements that are expressed on the facades of the buildings in the Treasury Reserve precinct, including columns, arches, heavy cornices, hoods, pediments, keystones, swags and other sculptural elements, applying and reinterpreting them in a mannerist fashion to the facades of the Commonwealth Offices building. Other baroque elements include the enlarged and highly rusticated arches over the main entrances; the two-storey column elements used either side of the stair window over the main entrance to the south block; the concave corners and cartouche to the eastern end of the east wing; the horizontal concave arch over the main eastern entry to the north block; and, the circular window element high in the wall above this entry. The building has purpose-made wrought iron grills to the lower level windows, which match the wrought iron fencing to the surrounding garden beds and gates.

**Interior**

Internally, the building is a relatively modern office building, built around a reinforced concrete frame that enables an open and flexible layout of the spaces within.

The whole building was refurbished in 1999–2000. This work removed much of the evidence of the earlier fit-outs recorded in the 1991 CP; but generally reinstated much of the original layout of the building. This included the arrangement of office spaces either side of the central corridors, which run east west and north south down the centre of each block, extending out from the central service core that houses the stairs and lifts.

There is a clear hierarchy throughout the building. Decorative detail is concentrated in the more important public areas, such as the front entrance, main staircase and foyers on each floor. The grander, lower floors feature high ceilings and large windows, which reduce in size as they progress up the building.
### Landscape Setting

The Commonwealth Offices lie in a precinct of public buildings dating from 1858, with the style of 4 Treasury Place drawing on its existing neighbours and providing a series of elegant public office buildings. Other significant buildings in the area include Royal Exhibition Building and Melbourne Museum, both located within Carlton Gardens 1km north-east of Commonwealth Offices Building. To the south is also the Melbourne Cricket Ground, while Saint Patrick's Catholic Cathedral and Holy Trinity Lutheran Church lie 200m to the north.

The building covers most of its unusually and irregularly shaped site, with each wing extending to the site boundaries. Only small areas have been left over around the building for landscaping. These generally feature low maintenance herbaceous plantings and include several large palm trees (on the east and north). They are enclosed by wrought iron palisade fences mounted on stone plinths that generally run along the boundary of the site. The ironwork matches that on the building.

Two courtyard areas flank the link dividing the north and south blocks. On the east, a row of tall cyprus and two large palm trees screen a small paved courtyard that provides bicycle parking and level entry to the building for the disabled. The western space is landscaped in a similar manner to the other garden bed around the building and is open to a lawn area, belonging to the adjacent Department of Agriculture building. This lawn, with its associated jacaranda trees, contributes to the landscape setting of the Commonwealth Offices building.

### Views

Although the Commonwealth Offices building was designed to be seen in the round, the views of its principal facade (facing Treasury Place) from the Treasury Gardens that it overlooks are restricted by several very large trees planted across the road (particularly in summer when the leaves are on the trees). The most open views of the building are from Fitzroy Gardens and Lansdowne Street to the east and from St Andrews Place to the north.

The building contributes to the longitudinal views along Treasury Place, contributing to the consistency of scale and architectural expression of the buildings lining Treasury Place. It provides the culmination of the row of buildings when looking east toward Fitzroy Gardens.

### Curtilage
The visual and heritage curtilage of the site extends beyond the existing site boundaries to include areas that make a substantial contribution to the setting of the building. Thus, the heritage curtilage for the Commonwealth Offices building includes the lawn area belonging to and located to the east of 3 Treasury Place; grassed area separating the Commonwealth Offices Building from Lansdowne Street to the northeast, and the footpath adjacent to the building along Treasury Place.

### Heritage Objects and Collections

No significant objects and collections are located at Commonwealth Offices, 4 Treasury Place, Melbourne.

### History and Summary of Uses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1835</td>
<td>Occupation of the land by Kulin people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1835</td>
<td>Treaty negotiation with Batman resulting in dislocation of Wurundjeri, Boonwurrung Bunurong and Wathaurong speaking people from their traditional lands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1837</td>
<td>Assistant Surveyor-General Hoddle laid out Melbourne's first town grid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>Hoddle's 1840 plan shows the layout of East Melbourne aligned to magnetic north, creating a wedge shaped space between the two grids. The wedge reserve remained open space and would later house many state government buildings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1848</td>
<td>Fitzroy Gardens was established on 67 acres of the East Melbourne subdivision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1851</td>
<td>Gold was discovered—Victoria separated from NSW.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1855</td>
<td>Victoria was granted responsible government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850s</td>
<td>The influx of migrants to the goldfields brought wealth and prosperity to Melbourne and saw the population increase fourfold. An extensive program of public works began, funded by gold discoveries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850s</td>
<td>The wedge reserve between the two grids was enlarged and set aside for a 'mass of government offices', the first being Parliament House built in 1856.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1856–1858</td>
<td>The Government Printing Office was the first government building constructed in the Treasury Reserve precinct before the precinct was established.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1857–1858</td>
<td>The southern part of wedge shaped reserve below Gipps Street West (now St Andrews Place) had the streets removed and was enlarged east across Section 49 and part of Section 18 of the East Melbourne subdivision. This created an area of 21 acres set aside for public offices. The Government Printing Office lay within this area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1858–1862</td>
<td>The Treasury building was constructed in the western portion of land set aside for public offices. The building addressed the termination of Collins Street in a similar manner to Parliament House's address to Bourke Street.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td>Foundations were laid for the Crown Lands and Survey Department building within the 21 acre reserve, but the building was not constructed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1862</td>
<td>The 21 acres set aside for public offices became known as the Treasury Reserve. Treasury Reserve was enclosed by a corrugated iron fence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867</td>
<td>Treasury Reserve was landscaped to designs by Assistant Commissioner Hodgkinson. Paths were created, including one near the future site of the Commonwealth Offices building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1876</td>
<td>The Crown Lands and Survey Department building was constructed fronting Treasury Gardens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1876</td>
<td>Treasury Place was formed. The 14½ acres south of Treasury Place became known as Treasury Gardens. The triangular shaped land north of Treasury Place became known as</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Treasury Reserve.

1901 The year of Federation and the establishment of the Commonwealth Public Service. Melbourne established as the Federal Capital of Australia.

1901–1912 Commonwealth Public Service Offices were located in various buildings around Melbourne.

1906–1907 The Department of Agriculture building was constructed within the Treasury Reserve, east of the Crown Lands and Survey Department building (now the Department of Education).

1908 A proposal was put forward to construct a building to accommodate all Commonwealth Government offices.

1910 Original plans for the Commonwealth Offices building were drawn by the State Government of Victoria, but not used.

1911 Land in Treasury Place was purchased by the Commonwealth from the Victorian Government for the construction of the Commonwealth Offices building.

1911 The five-storey Commonwealth Offices building was designed by John Smith Murdoch, Australia’s first Commonwealth Government Architect. He designed both the south and the north block.

1911–1912 The south block of the Commonwealth Offices building was constructed.

1912 Prime Minister Andrew Fisher occupied an office in the first floor east wing of the south block, with the cabinet room adjoining. The Attorney General and his offices moved into the first floor west wing, the Treasurer’s Department occupied the ground and second floors; and the Postmaster General occupied the third and fourth floors. The basement and fifth floors were used by all departments. The building had a strong room to house the nation’s gold reserve.

1912–1913 The north block of the Commonwealth Offices building was constructed.

1914 The Department of Home Affairs moved into the Commonwealth Offices

1927 Canberra became the new Federal Capital of Australia. The provisional Parliament House was opened in Canberra (also designed by John Smith Murdoch) and the Prime Minister and Cabinet moved there immediately, though still held offices in the Commonwealth Offices building in Melbourne.

1928 The Attorney General’s Department, the Home and Territories Department and the Trade and Customs Department were relocated to Canberra.

1930s Offices for the Governor-General were located within the Commonwealth Offices building.

1947 An additional storey was added to all three-storey sections of the Commonwealth Offices building.

1948 The Government’s Canberra Transfer plan was approved but achieved few bulk transfers over the next ten years because of a shortage of housing and office accommodation in Canberra.

1953 By this date, more central government administrations continued to be located in the Commonwealth Offices in Melbourne than in Canberra.

1957 Significant movement of Government offices to Canberra occurred following the establishment of the National Capital Development Commission in 1957.
1970s  The Canberra Transfer Program continued and by 1972 components of 18 Commonwealth departments and agencies had been transferred to Canberra.

1991  A Conservation Plan for the Commonwealth Offices, Treasury Gardens, Melbourne, was prepared by Australian Construction Services, for the Australian Property Group.

1999  A grant of $15.8 million Federal Government was awarded to restore and refurbish the Commonwealth Offices building.

2000–2001  Refurbishment of the Commonwealth Offices building was undertaken. The 1947 additions were removed.

2001  The refurbished Commonwealth Offices building was officially opened by Prime Minister John Howard.

Source: Godden Mackay Logan, 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statutory Heritage Values</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gazetted Statement of Significance - Commonwealth Heritage List</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Commonwealth Offices building is associated with the foundation of the Commonwealth of Australia and with Melbourne as the Seat of the Federal Government until 1927. It was the first office building constructed by the Commonwealth and has been used as the Melbourne offices of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Governor General since 1912 (Criterion A.4) (Historic Theme: 7.3: Federating Australia). The Offices are also associated with the application of Labor principles by Home Affairs Minister King O’Malley through the establishment of paid wet weather time for workers on the site (Criterion A.4). The Commonwealth Offices is a rare and outstanding example of a Commonwealth building designed in the Edwardian Baroque style, as seen in features such as the exaggerated keystones, occuli, cartouche, heavy cornicing and giant arches. The Offices are distinctive internally for the use of three colours of marble from the Bruthen district of Gippsland, contrasting joinery and cantilevered concrete curved staircase. The offices represent the Commonwealth Government’s willingness to embrace new technology through the use of reinforced concrete construction (Criteria B.2, D.2 and E.1). The offices are associated with and represent a major work of, significant Commonwealth architect John Smith Murdoch (Criterion H.1). The Commonwealth building complements other notable buildings in this important Melbourne precinct and is a significant element in the
The Commonwealth Offices building is associated with the foundation of the Commonwealth of Australia and with Melbourne as the Seat of the Federal Government until 1927. It was the first office building constructed by the Commonwealth and has been used as the Melbourne offices of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Governor General since 1912. The Offices are also associated with the application of Labor principles by Home Affairs Minister King O’Malley through the establishment of paid wet weather time for workers on the site.

**Attributes**
The original form, fabric and detail of the building.

### Criterion B – Rarity

The Commonwealth Offices is a rare and outstanding example of a Commonwealth building designed in the Edwardian Baroque style, as seen in features such as the exaggerated keystones, occuli, cartouche, heavy cornicing and giant arches. The Offices are distinctive internally for the use of three colours of marble from the Bruthen district of Gippsland, contrasting joinery and cantilevered concrete curved staircase.

**Attributes**
The original form, fabric and detail of the building externally and internally, including coloured marble, contrasting joinery and the concrete staircase.

### Criterion C – Research

The Commonwealth Offices building does not fulfil this criterion.

### Criterion D – Characteristic Value

The Commonwealth Offices building is designed in the Edwardian Baroque style, as seen in features such as the exaggerated keystones, occuli, cartouche, heavy cornicing and giant arches. The offices represent the Commonwealth Government’s willingness to embrace new technology through the use of reinforced concrete construction.

**Attributes**
The architectural style and detail of the building externally and internally and the features noted above, including coloured marble, contrasting joinery and the concrete staircase.

### Criterion E – Aesthetic characteristics

The Commonwealth Offices is an outstanding example of a Commonwealth building designed in the Edwardian Baroque style, as seen in features such as the exaggerated keystones, occuli, cartouche, heavy cornicing and giant arches. The Offices are distinctive internally for the use of three colours of marble from the Bruthen district of Gippsland, contrasting joinery and cantilevered concrete curved staircase. The Commonwealth building complements other notable buildings in this important Melbourne precinct and is a significant element in the streetscape.

**Attributes**
The original form, fabric and detail of the building externally and internally, including coloured marble, contrasting joinery and the concrete staircase, plus the building’s streetscape setting and contribution to streetscape.

### Criterion F – Technical achievement

The Commonwealth Offices building does not fulfil this criterion.

### Criterion G –

The Commonwealth Offices building does not fulfil this criterion.

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**streetscape (Criterion E.1).**
### Social Value

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion H – Significant people</th>
<th>The offices are associated with and represent a major work of, significant Commonwealth architect John Smith Murdoch.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attributes</td>
<td>The architectural elements designed by Murdoch.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Criterion I - Indigenous tradition | The Commonwealth Offices building does not fulfil this criterion. |

#### Department of Finance’s (Finance) updated heritage assessment

| Finance’s updated Statement of Significance for Commonwealth Heritage values | Constructed in 1912, the Commonwealth Offices building is significant as the first office building constructed by and for the Commonwealth of Australia, and the only Commonwealth office building to have continuously remained in Commonwealth ownership and use outside of Canberra. The building remains as a physical reminder of the importance of Melbourne as the interim Federal Capital of Australia between 1901 and 1927. Built to accommodate Commonwealth administration during the early years of federation, the building continues to provide Melbourne accommodation for the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. The building’s location in the Treasury Reserve precinct and its connection to the neighbouring Department of Agriculture building reflect the close historic relationship between the Commonwealth and the State of Victoria, which donated the land for its construction.  

The Commonwealth Offices building is an outstanding example of an Edwardian Baroque style government building in Australia. The adoption of the style represents a transition from the strict classical mould of nineteenth-century government architecture and embodies the nationalistic spirit of the new Commonwealth of Australia at Federation. The decorative use of local marble from the Bruthen district in Gippsland in the ground floor foyer is representative of the emphasis on the use of local Australian materials in government buildings, reflecting the new nationalism of the time.  

The building displays a clearly articulated hierarchy of detailing in its facades, with a strong rusticated base, and cornices, string courses and hood mouldings delineating the various floors. This hierarchy is reflected internally, with the most important spaces being located on the lower floors. The building also features many typical Baroque details, including deep rusticated arches, recessed bays, projecting porticos, columns and pilasters, enlarged and broken pediments over tripartite windows, ornamental swags, scrolls, keystones, rendered architraves, cartouches, precast balustrade elements, decorative ironwork, oculus (circular window) and concave corner details. The Commonwealth coat of arms over the main entrance porch strengthens the entrance and symbolises the building’s Commonwealth status.  

The building provides the eastern termination to Melbourne’s highly significant Treasury Reserve precinct and is an important contributory element to the precinct and the streetscape of Treasury Place. The south block of the building reflects the strict symmetry, scale and form of the neighbouring classical revival state government buildings in the precinct and along Treasury Place. The north block is less classically constrained as it responds to the irregular complexity of its site. The building was designed to be viewed in the round and is an important element in the views from Lansdowne Street, Fitzroy Gardens, Treasury Gardens and St Andrews Place. The setting of the building is enhanced by the surrounding parks and gardens. |
The Commonwealth Offices building is an early example of a modern reinforced concrete framed office building (built only four years after the first reinforced concrete building in Melbourne). The concrete frame (columns and beams), which is clearly expressed internally, enabled considerable flexibility in the internal layout of the building. The cantilevered concrete stairs throughout the building, particularly the curved main stairs (with original timber and wrought iron balustrading, marble newel post, decorative plaster brackets, pediments and cartouches) demonstrate a high degree of creative and technical achievement.

The original purpose made Chubb treasury vault door, which survives in the basement, was one of the first keyless vault doors ever to be produced, designed to be opened by two combination locks manipulated by dials. The locks also featured internal clocks which limited access to the vault door outside of working hours.

The Commonwealth Offices building is associated with the first Commonwealth Government Architect, John Smith Murdoch (1862–1945) and is regarded as his finest work, demonstrating his proficiency in the Edwardian Baroque style. Murdoch is known for his work in the Federal Capital, Canberra, including the design of the Old (Provisional) Parliament House, and the development of the stripped classical or Federal Capital style.

The construction of the Commonwealth Offices building was also associated with King O’Malley, the Minister for Home Affairs, who brought the Labour Party principles at the time into practice through employing direct labour to construct the building. Of particular note was his controversial decision to allow paid wet weather time to his workers.

Source: GML, Heritage Management Plan, June 2014

| Criterion A - Processes | Constructed in 1912, the Commonwealth Offices building is the first building constructed by and for the Commonwealth of Australia. Its location in Melbourne reflects the importance of Melbourne as the interim Federal Capital of Australia between 1901 and 1927. The building was built to accommodate Commonwealth administrative departments and has continued to provide Melbourne accommodation for the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The building remains as a physical reminder of the close historic relationship between the Commonwealth and the State of Victoria, being situated in the State Government’s Treasury Reserve Precinct, which is in close proximity to the Victorian State Parliament House, where both the State and the Commonwealth held their Parliamentary sittings whilst Melbourne was the Federal Capital of Australia. The physical link between the Commonwealth Offices building and the neighbouring Victorian Department of Agriculture building provides evidence of the close connection between Commonwealth and State government in the early years of federation.

Attributes / contributory elements:

- The Commonwealth Offices building itself.
- Its location within the Treasury Reserve Precinct.
- The connection between the Commonwealth Offices building and the neighbouring Victorian Department of Agriculture building. |

| Criterion B – Rarity | The Commonwealth Offices building is rare as the first office building constructed by and for the Commonwealth of Australia, and the only Commonwealth office building to have continuously remained in Commonwealth ownership and use outside of Canberra.

The Commonwealth Offices building is also rare as an outstanding example of an Edwardian Baroque style government building in Australia. The adoption of the style
represents a break from the strict classical mould of nineteenth century Government architecture and embodies the nationalistic spirit of the new Commonwealth of Australia at Federation.

The basement strong room, which retains its original Chubb door, was considered to be the best in Australia at the time it was built and is one of only two such strong rooms surviving from this period in Melbourne.

Attributes / contributory elements:
- The original form, fabric and Baroque detailing of the building, both externally and internally.
- The entrance foyer with its decorative marble trim and grand curved cantilevered concrete stair.
- The original purpose made Chubb treasury vault door.

| Criterion C – Research | The Commonwealth Offices building, and the documentary and oral sources associated with it, has the potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the early and evolving administration of the Commonwealth of Australia and the way it has accommodated its departmental offices, particularly those of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The Commonwealth Offices building also has the potential to yield information about the connection between the Victorian State and Commonwealth governments in the early years of Federation in Australia.

Attributes / contributory elements:
- Commonwealth Ownership and use of the building.
- Location within the Victorian State Government Treasury Reserve Precinct. |

| Criterion D – Characteristic Value | The decorative use of local marble from the Bruthen district in Gippsland in the ground floor foyer is representative of the emphasis on the use of local Australian materials in government buildings, reflecting the new nationalism of the time.

Attributes / contributory elements:
- Commonwealth ownership and use of the building.
- The use of local Australian materials including the marble in the main entrance foyer and bluestone steps. |

| Criterion E – Aesthetic characteristics | The Commonwealth Offices building is an outstanding example of an Edwardian Baroque style architecture that was designed to be viewed in the round.

The building provides the eastern termination to Melbourne’s highly significant Treasury Reserve Precinct and is an important contributory element to the precinct. The south block of the building reflects the strict symmetry, scale and form of the neighbouring classical revival state government buildings, particularly as it addresses Treasury Place. The north block is less classically constrained as it responds to the irregular complexity of its site, although the principal elevations of each wing are arranged symmetrically about their central axes. The central raised mansard roof elements contribute to the strength of the two blocks.

The facades of the Commonwealth Offices building reflect hierarchical arrangement of the facades of the neighbouring government buildings in the Treasury Reserve Precinct. This is expressed through the strong rusticated base at ground floor level, cornices, string... |
courses and hood mouldings delineating the various floor levels and the rhythmical arrangement of windows punctuating the solid masonry walls. The façades of the Commonwealth Offices are adorned with typical Baroque features, including enlarged and broken pediments over tripartite windows, columns and pilasters, deep rusticated arches, recessed bays, projecting porticos, ornamental swags, scrolls, keystones, hood mouldings, rendered architraves, cartouches, precast balustrade elements, decorative ironwork, oculus (circular window) and concave corner details. The Commonwealth coat of arms over the main entrance porch strengthens the entrance and symbolises the building’s Commonwealth status.

The hierarchy of the facades is repeated internally, with the most important spaces located on the lower levels where the floor to ceiling heights and level of detailing are greater. Important spaces include the main entrance foyer with its decorative marble facings, the grand curved cantilevered concrete stair, the main meeting rooms on the ground, first and second floors, and the lift foyers in the south block. The surviving original window and door joinery is of high quality.

The principal views of the building are from Lansdowne Street (north and south), Fitzroy Gardens (east), Treasury Gardens (south), Treasury Place (southwest) and St Andrew’s Place (northwest). The building overlooks both the Treasury Gardens to the south and Fitzroy Gardens to the east, both of which contribute greatly to the landscape setting of the place.

Attributes / contributory elements:
- Symmetrical arrangement of principal elevations about intersecting north–south and east–west axes of symmetry.
- Breakfront to south elevation, semicircular end to north elevation and raised mansard roof sections.
- Hierarchical arrangement of the facades—graduated detail to windows and wall surfaces and delineation of floors through string courses and cornices.
- Baroque features—enlarged and exaggerated arches, columns and pediments, heavily rusticated walls, recessed porches and bays, tripartite windows.
- Rendered decorative elements on facades—columns, pilasters, pediments, rusticated bands, ornamental swags, scrolls, keystones, hood mouldings, architraves, cartouches, precast balustrade elements.
- Landscape setting, including garden set behind palisade fences and broader setting provided by surrounding parks and gardens.
- Views from Lansdowne Street (north and south), Fitzroy Gardens (east), Treasury Gardens (south), Treasury Place (southwest) and St Andrew’s Place (northwest).
- Original window and door joinery, including polished doors featuring CA in the glazed panel.
- Marble facings in the entrance foyer.
- Principal spaces including main entrance foyer, main curved stair, large meeting rooms, lift foyers on each floor of the south block.

| Criterion F – Technical achievement | The Commonwealth Offices building is an early example of a modern reinforced concrete framed office building (built only four years after the first reinforced concrete building in Melbourne). It represents a transitional period in multi-storey construction as it retains thick masonry load bearing walls to the exterior and around the central core. The concrete |
frame (columns and beams) is expressed internally, with partitions introduced as needed between the columns. Narrow precast concrete slabs form the floor structure.

The structure of the building enabled much greater flexibility and adaptability in the internal layout of the building. This included large subdivisible office spaces either side of the central north–south and east–west corridors that extended out from the central service core.

The cantilevered concrete stairs throughout the building, particularly the curved main stair (with original timber and wrought iron balustrading, marble newel post, decorative plaster brackets, pediments and cartouches) demonstrate a high degree of creative and technical achievement.

The original purpose made Chubb treasury vault door was one of the first keyless vault doors ever to be produced, designed to be opened by two combination locks manipulated by dials. The locks also featured internal clocks which limited access to the vault door outside of working hours.

Attributes / contributory elements:
- The structure of the building—reinforced concrete frame (columns and beams), precast concrete floor slabs and load-bearing walls to the exterior and central service core.
- The original layout of the building—central service cores (including lifts and stairs) and offices arranged either side of the central north–south and east–west corridors.
- Cantilevered concrete stairs. Chubb Treasury vault door.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion G – Social Value</th>
<th>The Commonwealth Offices building does not fulfil this criterion for significant values.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Criterion H – Significant people</td>
<td>The building is strongly associated with the forming of the Commonwealth of Australia and has continued as the Melbourne offices of Australia’s Federal government, including the Prime Minister and Cabinet, since its establishment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Commonwealth Offices building is associated with the first Commonwealth Government Architect, John Smith Murdoch (1862–1945), who was principal architect for many significant Commonwealth buildings in the new Federal capital, Canberra, including the first Parliament House. The Commonwealth Offices building is regarded as Murdoch’s finest building, demonstrating his competence in the Edwardian Baroque style.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The construction of the Commonwealth Offices building was also associated with King O’Malley, the Minister for Home Affairs, who brought the Labour Party principles at the time into practice through employing direct labour to construct the building. Of particular note was his controversial decision to allow paid wet weather time to his workers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attributes / contributory elements:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Commonwealth ownership and use of the building, particularly occupation of the building by Prime Minister and Cabinet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Original elements designed by John Murdoch Smith.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criterion I - Indigenous tradition</td>
<td>The Commonwealth Offices building does not fulfil this criterion for significant values.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Source: GML, Heritage Management Plan, June 2014</td>
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**Statement of Significance for National Heritage Values**

First office building constructed by and for the Commonwealth of Australia and the only Commonwealth office building to have continuously remained in Commonwealth ownership and use outside of Canberra. Built to accommodate Commonwealth administration during the early years of federation, the building continues to provide Melbourne accommodation for the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. The building remains as a rare physical reminder of the importance of Melbourne as the interim Federal Capital of Australia between 1901 and 1927. The building is a physical reminder of the close historic relationship between the Commonwealth and the State of Victoria, being situated in the State Government’s Treasury Reserve Precinct. The Commonwealth Offices building is a rare and outstanding example of an Edwardian Baroque style government building in Australia. The adoption of the style represents a transition from the strict classical mould of nineteenth-century government architecture and embodies the nationalistic spirit of the new Commonwealth of Australia at Federation. The decorative use of local marble from the Bruthen district in Gippsland in the ground floor foyer is representative of the emphasis on the use of local Australian materials in government buildings, reflecting the new nationalism of the time.

The building displays a clearly articulated hierarchy of detailing in its facades, with a strong rusticated base, and cornices, string courses and hood mouldings delineating the various floors. This hierarchy is reflected internally, with the most important spaces being located on the lower floors. The building also features many typical Baroque details, including deep rusticated arches, recessed bays, projecting porticos, columns and pilasters, enlarged and broken pediments over tripartite windows, ornamental swags, scrolls, keystones, rendered architraves, cartouches, precast balustrade elements, decorative ironwork, oculus (circular window) and concave corner details. The Commonwealth coat of arms over the main entrance porch strengthens the entrance and symbolises the building’s Commonwealth status.

The original purpose made Chubb treasury vault door, which survives in the basement, was one of the first keyless vault doors ever to be produced, designed to be opened by two combination locks manipulated by dials. The locks also featured internal clocks, which limited access to the vault door outside of working hours.

**Criterion A - Processes**

Constructed in 1912, the Commonwealth Offices building is the first building constructed by and for the Commonwealth of Australia. Its location in Melbourne reflects the importance of Melbourne as the interim Federal Capital of Australia between 1901 and 1927. The building was built to accommodate Commonwealth administrative departments and has continued to provide Melbourne accommodation for the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The building remains as a physical reminder of the close historic relationship between the Commonwealth and the State of Victoria, being situated in the State Government’s Treasury Reserve Precinct, which is in close proximity to the Victorian State Parliament House, where both the State and the Commonwealth held their Parliamentary sittings whilst Melbourne was the Federal Capital of Australia. The physical link between the Commonwealth Offices building and the neighbouring Victorian Department of Agriculture building provides evidence of the close connection between Commonwealth and State government in the early years of federation.

Attributes / contributory elements:

- The Commonwealth Offices building itself.
- Its location within the Treasury Reserve Precinct.
• The connection between the Commonwealth Offices building and the neighbouring Victorian Department of Agriculture building.

| Criterion B – Rarity | The Commonwealth Offices building is rare as the first office building constructed by and for the Commonwealth of Australia, and the only Commonwealth office building to have continuously remained in Commonwealth ownership and use outside of Canberra.  

The Commonwealth Offices building is also rare as an outstanding example of an Edwardian Baroque style government building in Australia. The adoption of the style represents a break from the strict classical mould of nineteenth century Government architecture and embodies the nationalistic spirit of the new Commonwealth of Australia at Federation.  

The basement strong room, which retains its original Chubb door, was considered to be the best in Australia at the time it was built and is one of only two such strong rooms surviving from this period in Melbourne. |

| Criterion C – Research | The Commonwealth Offices building does not fulfil this criterion for outstanding values. |

| Criterion D – Characteristic Value | The Commonwealth Offices building does not fulfil this criterion for outstanding values. |

| Criterion E – Aesthetic characteristics | The Commonwealth Offices building is an outstanding example of an Edwardian Baroque style architecture that was designed to be viewed in the round. The building displays a clearly articulated hierarchy of detailing in its facades, with a strong rusticated base, and cornices, string courses and hood mouldings delineating the various floors. This hierarchy is reflected internally, with the most important spaces being located on the lower floors. The building also features many typical Baroque features, including enlarged and broken pediments over tripartite windows, columns and pilasters, deep rusticated arches, recessed bays, projecting porticos, ornamental swags, scrolls, keystones, hood mouldings, rendered architraves, cartouches, precast balustrade elements, decorative ironwork, oculus (circular window) and concave corner details. |

| Criterion F – Technical achievement | The Commonwealth Offices building does not fulfil this criterion for outstanding values. |

| Criterion G – Social Value | The Commonwealth Offices building does not fulfil this criterion for outstanding values. |

| Criterion H – Significant people | The Commonwealth Offices building does not fulfil this criterion for outstanding values. |

| Criterion I - Indigenous tradition | The Commonwealth Offices building does not fulfil this criterion for outstanding values.  

Source: Godden McKay Logan, 2014 |

<p>| Non-Statutory Listings | The Commonwealth Offices building is identified as being of National significance on the National Trust (Victoria Chapter) Register (File No. B2692). |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Register of the National Estate (RNE)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Commonwealth Offices building is included in the RNE as a registered place (Place ID: 17018), and is also located within the Parliament/East Melbourne Conservation Area (Place ID: 5277).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Additional information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property Access</th>
<th>The building provides secure government accommodation. Access to the foyer is permitted.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>Department of Finance (Finance) consulted with internal Finance stakeholders and contractors, and the relevant Aboriginal community members. Advice was sought from the Office of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria. For any proposed works to 4 Treasury Place, Melbourne, consultation should be undertaken with the <a href="#">Compliance, Environment and Heritage team</a>, Department of Finance. Any additional external consultation with other interested parties should include the <a href="#">Compliance, Environment and Heritage team</a>, Department of Finance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More information</td>
<td>For further information regarding the Commonwealth Offices, please contact the <a href="#">Department of Finance</a>.</td>
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</table>