

Melbourne City Baths

Conservation Management Plan

420 Swanston Street, Melbourne VIC 3000

October 2018



Prepared by

Prepared for

LOVELL CHEN



CITY OF
MELBOURNE

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CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

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Executive Summary

This Conservation Management Plan (CMP) addresses the Melbourne City Baths, Swanston Street, Melbourne. The baths were originally constructed by Melbourne City Council in 1904, and still operate as a municipal baths and swimming facility. The place is included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR 466), to the extent of the whole of the site, including the landholding, building exteriors and interiors. The site is subject to the Victorian *Heritage Act* 2017.

The CMP includes relevant background information; a history of the site; a physical description and analysis of the building and site components; an exploration of the heritage significance and values of the site overall and identification of the relative significance of different site components (primary, contributory and little or no significance); opportunities and constraints; implementation; and management and conservation policies and recommendations. The report also includes current and historic images; plans and graphics; and supplementary information in several appendices including historic architectural drawings as reproduced.

The City Baths have undergone change and upgrades throughout the twentieth century, largely in response to changing social practices associated with bathing and swimming; pressure for increased space; and evolving community expectations in relation to recreational programmes and activities. The most substantial changes occurred in the 1980s when the eastern part of the site was redeveloped; the form and configuration of the front entrance has also been reworked on several occasions.

Despite these changes, the City Baths is distinguished through retaining its major original internal components, albeit with original fabric and details often removed, updated or replaced. The internal components continue to help demonstrate aspects of the historic internal layout and function, including aspects of the original gender and class segregation. The City Baths is also notable for its prominence and presentation enhanced by its triangular island site and high degree of visibility to all building elevations. As a general comment, the exterior of the 1904 development is more intact than the interior.

The specific elements of primary, contributory and little or no significance are identified in Chapter 6 and illustrated in plans at the end of that chapter. Those of primary significance should be retained and conserved, require careful consideration and protection, and sensitive management; those of contributory significance generally should be retained and conserved but provide greater flexibility in terms of their treatment; and those of little or no significance are generally subject to few or no constraints, albeit their future treatment should not impact on or diminish the overall significance of the baths.

In terms of the heritage values, the analysis and assessment undertaken for this report concludes that the City Baths are:

- Of architectural significance as one of the most distinctive Edwardian Baroque buildings in Melbourne, and a refined and early example of the mode; and an important work of noted Victorian architect, J J Clark.
- Of historical significance as a reminder of the important role played by bathing establishments in the early twentieth century; and illustrative of the patterns of social organisation in the early twentieth century including gender and class segregation. The baths are also the most intact of the surviving early purpose-built municipal pools in Melbourne, and the earliest of the public indoor pools.
- Likely of social significance for long-term patrons and users of the baths; and as a prominent building on the northern edge of Melbourne's CBD with a high level of public recognition.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and brief

This Conservation Management Plan (CMP) has been prepared for the City of Melbourne, and addresses the Melbourne City Baths, in Swanston Street, Melbourne. The CMP responds to a Request for Quotation (RFQ) issued by Council in April 2018, which outlined the requirements and tasks for preparation of the report.

The heritage significance of the City Baths is widely recognised and reflected in the inclusion of the place in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR 466), for its architectural and historical significance.

The methodology and approach followed in the preparation of this CMP are outlined below, however the focus of the report is on the conservation and management of the heritage significance and values of the place.

1.1.1 Melbourne City Baths

Melbourne City Baths is located at 420 Swanston Street, Melbourne VIC 3000 (Figure 2). The building dates from 1903-04, and in the Edwardian Baroque style with a distinctive use of red brick and contrasting cement render mouldings and details. The facility occupies a very constrained triangular site, which is substantially covered in buildings. The highly exposed elevations or facades are to the west (Swanston Street), north (Victoria Street) and south (Franklin Street) sides of the site.

The baths are located on a site which was reserved for public baths from the 1850s, with the first bathing facility opened in 1860. Public baths were an important community facility in early Melbourne, as private bathrooms were uncommon. However, despite their popularity, a lack of maintenance led to the baths closing in 1899.

The City of Melbourne then held a design competition for a new bathhouse in 1903, which was won by noted architect J J Clarke. The new building when it opened provided gender segregated bathing facilities including two swimming pools, slipper baths, spray baths, Jewish Mikva baths and Turkish baths. Class segregation was also reflected in the baths, with second-class facilities located in the basement and first-class on the floor above.

The gender segregated facilities can be 'read' in the symmetrical presentation of the building, especially to Swanston Street, with men's and women's facilities to either side of the prominent elevated central entrance bay.

Despite being very popular in the early twentieth century, with swimming carnivals regularly held there into the 1920s, the baths condition again began to deteriorate. Also, by mid-twentieth century, private bathroom facilities were more common in domestic dwellings. After the 1956 Olympics, swimming became a popular sport and many suburban pools were constructed, again resulting in reduced numbers using the City Baths for recreation. Attempts to demolish the baths in the 1970s coincided with a broader campaign to save Melbourne's heritage, with the Builders Labourers Federation declaring the baths the 'Workers Baths' in the 1970s as part of the broader 'green bans' movement. The baths were eventually renovated in the 1980s.

1.1.2 Context for preparation of the CMP

Melbourne City Baths has in excess of 2,250 members who use the aquatic and 'dry' facilities; there are also multi-visit pass holders and casual visitors with (in 2016) some 11,500-13,500 visits per month.¹

The new CBD North railway station, as part of the Melbourne Metro project, is set to open in several years and will be located beneath, and adjacent to, the City Baths. An entrance to the new station is proposed to be located on Franklin Street, east of Swanston Street. On its completion, it is expected that increased numbers of commuters in this area of the city will consequently increase visitation to the baths, and demand for the type and number of services provided by the baths. This CMP has been written with an aware of this, and the context of proactive planning for the future of the baths, to ensure the facility remains relevant, evolves in response to demographic growth and demand, and continues to meet community expectations. In line with this, Council also wishes to explore the potential to expand, or condense and enhance, the services and amenities provided by the facility.²

Figure 1 Aerial view of the City Baths, April 2018; north is at top

Source Nearmap.com



Figure 2 Map showing the location of the Melbourne City Baths, indicated with a red arrow; north is at top

Source www.streetdirectory.com.au



1.2 Methodology & content

This CMP broadly follows the principles and processes set out in the *Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, 2013* and its Practice Notes. The *Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, 2013* establishes a standard of practice for those involved in assessing, managing and undertaking works to places of cultural significance. It also has regard for the recommendations of, *Conservation Management Plans: Managing Heritage Places*, prepared by the Heritage Council of Victoria (2010).

The CMP includes an Executive Summary; relevant background information; a history of the site; a physical description and analysis of the building and site components; an exploration of the heritage significance of the site overall, and identification of the different levels and attributes of significance as relate to the different site components; identification of opportunities and constraints; implementation; and management and conservation policies and recommendations in relation to the building complex. The report is also generously illustrated with historic and current images; includes plans and graphics; and has additional and supplementary information included in several appendices.

The following key tasks were undertaken in preparing this CMP.

Review background information

This task involved review of all relevant background information, including historical documents and previous reports relating to the baths. The task also informed the physical survey, historical research and the conservation policies and recommendations.

Relatively recent studies of relevance, which were accessed and reviewed, included the 2004 structural investigation of the main pool hall balcony (Beauchamp Hogg Spano Consultants Pty Ltd); 2014 Colour Scheme and Heritage External Paint report (Lovell Chen); 2015 roofing and façade report; 2016 Precinct 5 CBD North Station report; and the 2017 Condition Assessment and Recommendations (RBA Architects & Conservation Consultants). Earlier reports on the baths were also accessed, including reports documenting restoration and redevelopment works in 1979 and 1986.

All the above are identified in the Bibliography to this CMP.

In addition to the reports, the following sources were also accessed:

- University of Melbourne Archives
- Public Record Office Victoria
- State Library of Victoria
- Museum Victoria
- National Library of Australia

1.2.1 History of the baths

Chapter 2 contains a history of the City Baths. Its preparation utilised the background information cited above, historical and archival records, published sources, and historic images and plans.

The history addresses the historical context of the establishment of the City Baths in Melbourne and the historical importance of public bathing facilities for the community. It examines the evolution of bathing by Melbourne's residents, from early use of the Yarra River to the establishment of the first City Baths building in 1860; the shifts in popularity as private bathrooms became more common; and the later proliferation of municipal pools. It considers the evolution of public baths from an essential service providing hygiene to the residents of the city, to a place of recreation; and examines how bathing and recreation has evolved with social mores, from the City Bath's early gender segregation to the introduction of mixed bathing in the mid-twentieth century. The history also considers how the physical evolution of the building has reflected developments in the recreational uses of public baths, through to the late twentieth century, including the 1980s renovations and introduction of spas, saunas, gymnasium and squash courts. The cultural customs of the different migrant groups who historically used the facility, are also addressed.

1.2.2 Physical survey

A physical survey of the baths was undertaken, and is documented in Chapter 3. Note that this did not involve a detailed assessment of the physical condition of the building and its fabric, but rather focused on identifying what is original and early at the baths, and what has been added later. The survey involved both the exterior and interior of the building. The survey also informed the assessment of the relative significance of the spaces and fabric within the complex – recognising that not all elements of a heritage place are necessarily of equal significance, and some are often of little or no significance – and preparation of the policies and recommendations relating to potential new works and development (as included in Chapter 6). Plans, as prepared by Lovell Chen, are included which illustrate the different areas and elements of relative significance within the City Baths.

Assess significance

While the heritage significance of the City Baths is already established and reflected in the VHR listing, a further and deeper exploration of the significance has been undertaken here to assist in improving understanding about what is important at the place. This section of the report, at Chapter 4, addresses the heritage values and attributes in more detail; includes a comparative analysis of the baths in the context of similar places; and, on the basis of the further assessment undertaken here, makes recommendations on improving or enhancing the existing VHR statement of significance.

Management plan

This chapter of the CMP includes an overview of the statutory heritage framework and controls; addresses the obligations and requirements of the Victorian Heritage Register and *Heritage Act* 2017, including the steps and processes to go through for works and development approvals; reviews the current permit policy and exemptions, and make recommendations on how these might be improved and expanded. The chapter also addresses the Heritage Overlay; compliance; implementation of the CMP, including adoption and review; and concludes with an overview of Aboriginal heritage values.

Conservation policy

Chapter 6 includes a detailed conservation policy. This is a key component of the CMP, and amongst other things it includes the following:

- General conservation policies relating to:
 - › Conserving and managing significance
 - › Applying the Burra Charter
 - › Specialist advice and skills
 - › Significant elements
- Specific conservation policies relating to:
 - › Original building fabric
 - › External form, materials and details
 - › Internal elements and spaces within the complex
 - › Later fabric and elements
- Opportunities and constraints
- Risk management
- Site uses and usage
- Future works and development
- Maintenance and repairs
- Equitable access
- Interpretation

1.3 Aboriginal cultural heritage

At the outset of this study, and in line with Council's RFQ of April 2018, it was considered that the baths may possess Aboriginal cultural heritage significance, relating to the site's pre-contact history or historic use. Accordingly, and in line with City of Melbourne policy, the Aboriginal heritage values as relate to tangible fabric or intangible attributes, have been reviewed and considered in the preparation of this CMP and are addressed in Chapter 5. The conclusions regarding Aboriginal cultural heritage, together with an outline of the relevant heritage management policy framework and recommendations on further work, have been prepared by Extent Heritage.³

1.4 Other recent studies

Relatively recent studies of relevance, which were accessed and reviewed in the preparation of this CMP, include the 2004 structural investigation of the main pool hall balcony (Beauchamp Hogg Spano Consultants Pty Ltd); 2014 Colour Scheme and Heritage External Paint report (Lovell Chen); 2015 roofing and façade report; 2016 Precinct 5 CBD North Station report; and the 2017 Condition Assessment and Recommendations (RBA Architects & Conservation Consultants). Earlier reports on the baths were also accessed. These are all identified in the Bibliography to this CMP.

2.0 HISTORY

2.1 Introduction

The establishment of the Melbourne City Baths can be traced back to 1846, when the *Baths and Washhouses Act* in England paved the way for public bathing facilities to be established. Although Melbourne did not get a public bathhouse until 1860, its introduction was heavily influenced by the provision of public baths and washhouses in England as a means of ensuring basic standards of health.⁴ The influence of Victorian-era English sensibilities continued throughout the nineteenth century and into the start of the twentieth century, when the current Melbourne City Baths building was constructed to provide an essential public service in the provision of baths for hygiene purposes; it was also complete with separate entries for the genders and class segregation. Subsequently, in the mid-twentieth century, the introduction of mixed-gender bathing impacted the façade of the City Baths and the internal layout and arrangement of the original design. Other changes to the baths' physical fabric and form has been due to shifts in its use, evolving into a place to learn to swim and engage in recreation and fitness. These changes have also responded to the need to generate income to cover the high costs of operating the facility, another consistent issue since the baths' inception.

In early Melbourne, the terms bath and bathing were used interchangeably to refer to what in modern terms is swimming, as well as the act of washing the body for hygiene.⁵ This use in terminology shifted in the twentieth century, however the term 'baths' is still in place to describe the facility, despite the fact that the wash house aspect of the baths has long been superseded by the fitness element of recreational swimming.

Chapter 3 contains a description of the evolution of the City Baths, including a detailed overview of the main historical phases of change which have occurred at the site. Chapter 4, in comparing the City Baths with other similar municipal facilities, also contains some historical information. In addition, Appendix B includes copies of the original City Baths architectural drawings and later plans referred to in this chapter.

Sources for this historical overview include the University of Melbourne Archives, the City of Melbourne Archives and Art and Heritage Collection, the State Library of Victoria and the historic newspaper collection of the National Library of Australia.

2.2 Bathing in early Melbourne

The town of Melbourne was founded in 1835 and was surveyed in 1837 by Robert Hoddle into the gridded system of parallel streets leading north from the Yarra River. The site of the Melbourne City Baths is located at the north end of the city grid on a triangular site bounded by Swanston, Victoria and Franklin streets. The site was set aside as a public reserve in the early planning of Melbourne, adjacent to another reserve set aside for the new town's gaol and court house (Figure 3).

Melbourne began to develop within 12 months of the first sale of Crown land in 1837. Despite the new developments including some substantial houses and buildings, as well as lesser examples, and being more permanent than the tents which had previously been erected around the town, there was little in the way of running water and no underground sewers. Bathroom facilities were only within the purview of the very wealthy.

Melbourne soon developed a reputation for being dirty, with horses and cattle on the unpaved streets sending clouds of dust into the air and mixing both animal and human excrement. To gain relief from dusty and hot conditions, many residents used the Yarra River for bathing, polluting the water system that was also used for drinking water and the transport of goods. The beaches around Port Phillip Bay were also an option, but not as convenient as the Yarra River for inner-city residents. In the late 1840s, the town council implemented rules for bathing in the Yarra River, with the public fined for bathing after six o'clock in the morning and before seven in the evening.⁶ It has been debated whether these rules were implemented for health reasons or linked to Victorian-era middle class concerns with public morality.⁷

For those who could afford it, water was pumped from the river and delivered to houses for bathing by water cart. These costs were significant, and residents tended to bath only once a week.⁸ There was an increasing desire for a community bathing facility that could be used during daylight hours and away from public view.⁹ There were multiple applications for the establishment of privately run baths on the banks of the Yarra River during the early 1840s, but these were generally rejected by the Council.¹⁰

A short-lived bath on the river opened in 1844, with several hundred residents reportedly using the facility on the opening day.¹¹ Despite the Council banning bathing in all other parts of the river, the venture was costly and was closed in 1847.¹² Another small public bath opened in 1849, charging 2-shillings for admission or an annual fee of 15-shillings for a private bath.¹³ The cumbersome clothing required to be worn by women for modesty was also an obstacle to bathing, as was the cost for the city's poorer residents, despite a half-price fee for the working class.¹⁴

The lack of proper sanitation in the city caused continued health problems for residents. The Yarra River was also being used as waste dump and in the 1850s, the city's doctors were concerned about disease with the influx of more people with the Gold Rush. In 1853 a petition was lodged with members of the Victorian Legislative Council, signed by 104 concerned residents requesting the provision of a public baths for the city, and suggesting that baths be located on the banks of the river.

The petition read:

That your Memorialists have been repeatedly advised by their medical attendants to obtain Baths for themselves and their families, in periods of illness, and as a means of convalescence, but have been quite unable to employ this valuable means of health, from the entire absence of any sufficient Baths for themselves or their families.¹⁵

The petitioners evoked the provision of baths in ancient Rome as an argument for a bathing facility for Melbourne, with the English Victorian-era ideals of hygiene and cleanliness also influencing their desire for such facilities. The petitioners were slightly ahead of the 'bath consciousness' in England, where bathing did not become a general practice until the mid to late nineteenth century.¹⁶ The unsanitary conditions in Melbourne combined with the warmer weather meant its residents were more accustomed to bathing than the working-class in England, however with the industrialisation of towns and subsequent health scares, a municipal bathhouse in England soon became a symbol of progress.¹⁷ This symbolism was also attractive to the residents of burgeoning Melbourne.

2.3 The first public bath, 1860

Although private bath houses were operating in the city, multiple letters published in the local newspaper in the 1850s demonstrated the high level of interest in establishing a public bathing facility in Melbourne.¹⁸ Thomas Embling, a doctor and member of the Victorian Legislative Assembly, was a key proponent in the campaign to establish public baths, writing a persuasive letter to the editor of the *Argus* in 1856.¹⁹ In response to Embling’s pressure, the Government granted ‘an ample and convenient site’ for the purpose, on the City Baths’ present location (Figure 7).²⁰ Embling also chaired a *Select Committee upon Public Baths* in 1856-57, which found the issue ultimately fell into the area of public sanitation and therefore should reside under the authority of municipal authorities.²¹

The anticipated provision of public bathing was lauded as a win for the working class, with the *Argus* stating:

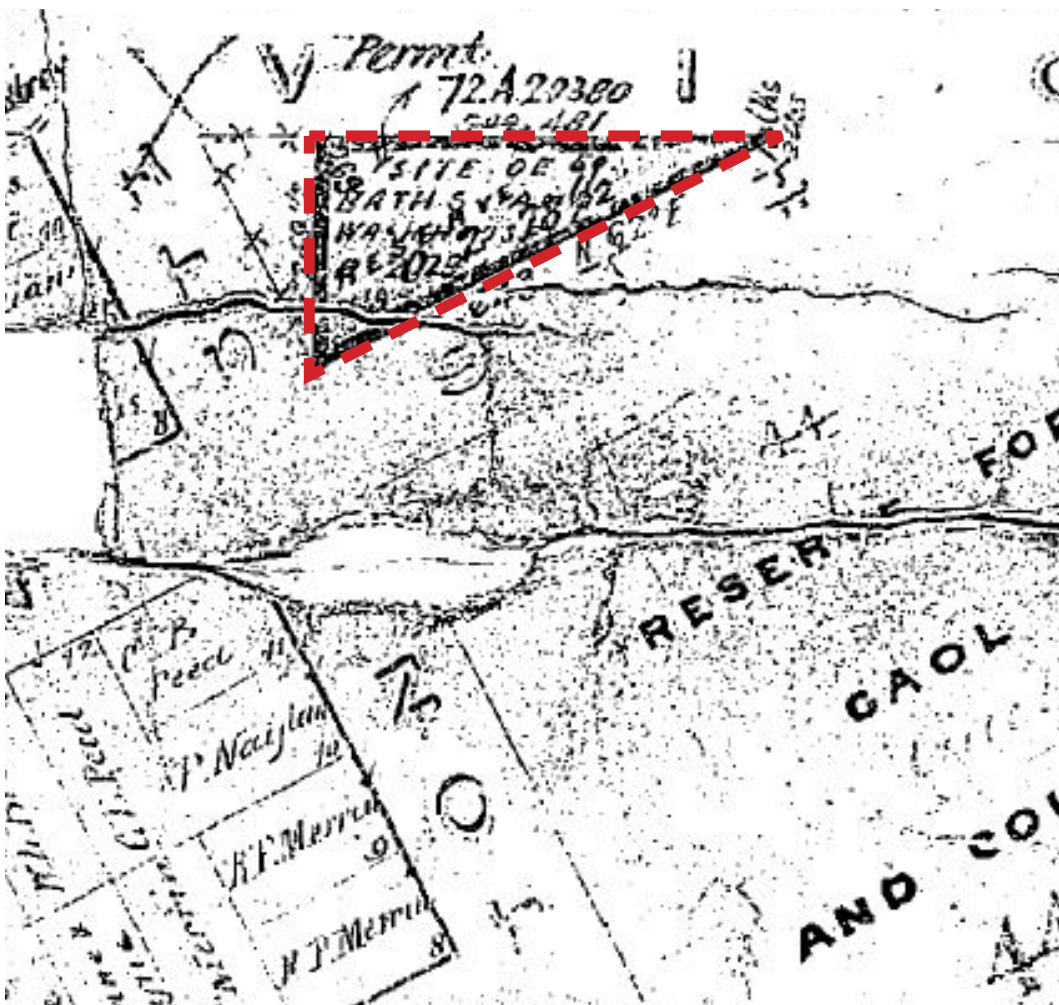


Figure 3 Put away plan for the City of Melbourne, signed A M Ross, draftsman, 1862, showing the reserve for the City Baths

Source Central Plan Office

To the exhausted labourer who has sustained one of our hot-wind days, and whose skin is covered with dust and perspiration, a bath is a first necessity. He has not time to visit the beach ... if really good baths were accessible, many of our artizans and laborers, as well as clerks and shopmen would take advantage of them, to the great benefit of their health and the increase of their comfort'.²²

The largely contemporaneous opening of the Yan Yean Reservoir water supply system in 1857 provided a source of water for a public bath in the city; and the Melbourne City Council passed a motion in 1858 to build a new bath and washhouse.²³ James Balmain was appointed to design the baths, however it was soon discovered he was indebted to one of the city councillors and his commission for the baths was to form his payment of the debt.²⁴ Balmain was also accused of using inferior building material, with bricks of mis-matched sizes and quality, and he was subsequently suspended from the project.²⁵

The new city baths were partially opened to the public in late 1859, however there were initial problems with ensuring a reliable water supply from Yan Yean.²⁶ Once the supply issues were sorted out, the City Baths officially opened to the public on 9 January 1860.²⁷ Constructed of wood, galvanised iron and brick, with a substantial bluestone plinth or semi-basement, the baths occupied the western end of the subject site, with the entry facing the corner of Swanston and Franklin streets (Figure 4 - Figure 8). It featured eight first class and sixteen second class slipper baths for both genders, as well as a swimming bath and family bathroom.²⁸ Early bathhouses used the term 'slipper bath' to mean a freestanding bath, named because of its shoe-like shape, with a raised end for leaning back whilst bathing.²⁹ The baths were open every day of the week and bathers were limited to half an hour's bathing (Figure 6). The new facility was extremely popular, with the month recording a total of over 20,000 visitors.³⁰

Figure 4 Public Baths,
Swanston Street, 1862, Charles
Nettleton (photographer)

Source State Library of
Victoria





Figure 5 Photograph by Charles Nettleton, looking south down Swanston Street, with the original City Baths bottom left and the Melbourne Town Hall in the distance, 1870

Source State Library of Victoria



Figure 6 City of Melbourne Public Baths, c.1890

Source State Library of Victoria, Ron Pullin collection of photographic prints

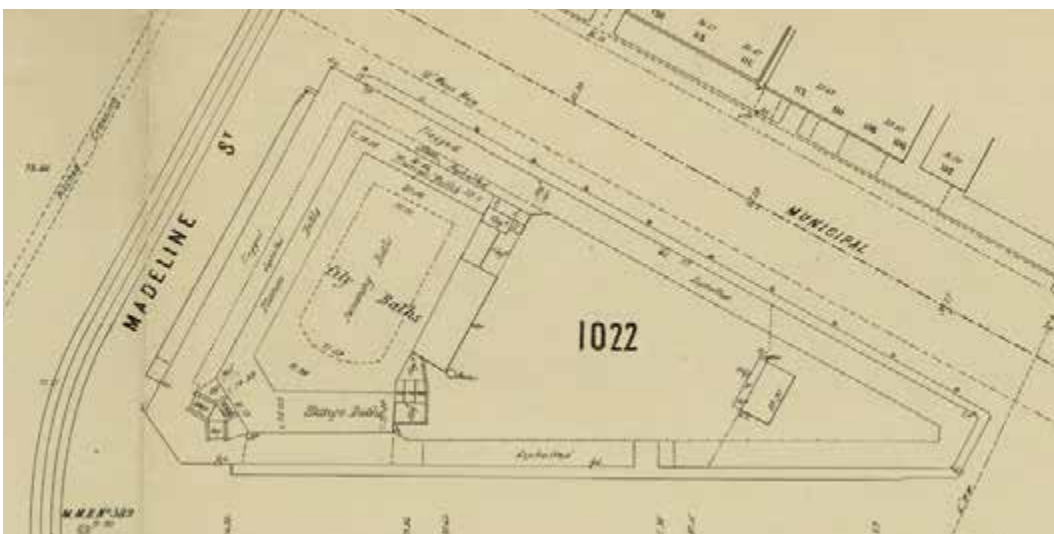
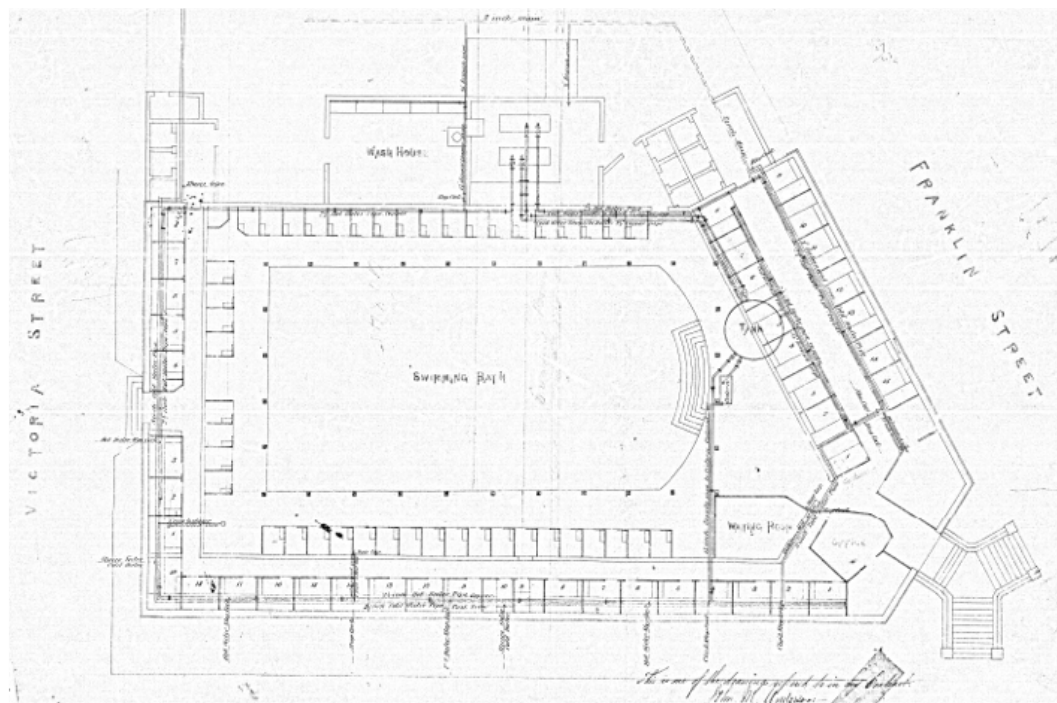


Figure 7 Footprint of the first City Baths building on the MMBW plan, 1895

Source Source: State Library of Victoria

Figure 8 James Balmain's original city baths design

Source City of Melbourne plan A200-422



Despite the baths being built by the Melbourne City Council, the operation of the facility was leased to private operators;³¹ and its condition deteriorated over the next twenty years.³² The popularity of the baths for reasons of personal hygiene was also in decline, as by the 1880s Melbourne's streets had largely been paved, and a proper sewerage system was being introduced to the metropolitan area. Many houses by the late nineteenth century were also being built with bathroom facilities and residents were less reliant on public baths for their hygiene needs. By the turn of the century, the lack of maintenance had caused the baths to completely fall into disrepair and the baths were closed in 1899.

2.4 The new City Baths, 1904

While the decline in popularity of the original City Baths and their eventual deterioration was in part due to improvements in sanitation and the health of the city, changes in the way municipal baths were being used were also emerging at the end of the nineteenth century. From being established in the middle of the latter century for the purposes of public health and hygiene, the introduction of private bathing facilities into the domestic sphere meant that public baths increasingly became a place for exercise and recreation. The original public baths, with just one swimming bath, did not adequately meet this recreational need and new bathing facilities were required.

2.4.1 Design and construction

In 1901, the City of Melbourne's Public Health Committee recommended new bathing facilities to replace the old baths on the same site (Figure 9).³³ A design competition was held, which reflected the focus on the use of the baths for exercise and recreation, rather than hygiene. The competition invited designs for a 'most modern' Public Bath House with two swimming baths. The guidelines called for 'special attention' to be paid to 'perfection of its internal arrangements, appliances, and fittings, rather than to mere external architectural embellishment'.³⁴ The baths were to include 'the usual accommodation' for caretaker's residence, ticket office, waiting room, boiler house, laundry, lavatories, sanitary conveniences, and provision for:

- Swimming Baths for men and women
- 1st and 2nd class Slipper Baths for both sexes
- Mickvah bath
- Laundry
- Resident for superintendent
- And the necessary steam plant.³⁵

The competition guidelines specified the size of the men's swimming bath (not less than 80 feet by 40 feet with a depth of water varying from 3 feet 6 inches to 7 feet 6 inches) but no specifications for the women and children's swimming bath.³⁶ The Swimming Baths were to be:

Designed with a view to light and cheerful effect; to be roofed, provided with platform not less than 5 feet wide at sides, and (in the case of the larger bath), if practicable, 10 feet at ends, with suitable dressing boxes around; preferably the bottom and sides of both baths to be faced with white glazed bricks or tiling; to be so arranged as to be capable of being used as gymnasium (or club room) during winter months.³⁷

The budget was limited to a total cost of £16,000, with the designs to be submitted by 6 January 1902. Nine designs were received, and the competition was won by noted architect John James 'J J' Clark. Clark had previously designed many Melbourne buildings for the Public Works Department, including the Treasury (1862) and Royal Mint (1872). The baths were designed in partnership with his son, Edward James 'E J' Clark, although it is unclear how much the latter contributed. It has been noted that drawings bear the signature of J J Clark and are executed in his drawing style.³⁸

In December 1902 the contract for construction of the new facility, worth £15,973, was awarded to Swanson Brothers with the condition that the works would be completed by 20 November 1903.³⁹ The *Leader* newspaper remarked:

The buildings are an ornament to the city – an ornamented all the more marked from the fact that they occupy the triangular block of land which for many years was an eyesore owing to the disgracefully dilapidated structures which stood upon it.⁴⁰

The desired timeline for opening was delayed due to the loss of 30 slipper baths which were being shipped from America on board the ship 'Erminie', which had left from New York but was feared missing.⁴¹ It is unclear whether these American manufactured slipper baths ever made it to Melbourne, but there was debate about sourcing locally made baths for the opening. The Council also adapted the scope of the works, substituting eight of the slipper baths for 12 spray baths, adding a Turkish style bath, stated to have been popular in England at the time.⁴² This change was eventually reversed in 1923, when the Turkish baths were converted to slipper baths due to the high cost of operating the steam baths.⁴³

The influence of English bathhouses was also evident in the architectural style and layout of the new baths. The new building was designed in the Edwardian Baroque style with a distinctive use of red brick and contrasting cement render mouldings and details (Figure 10). Described as a style popular in municipal baths of England, the official invitation to the opening declared that 'the provision of Public Baths is a prominent feature of Municipal Government in Great Britain' (Figure 16). Municipal baths in England commonly featured segregation by both gender and class.⁴⁴

Figure 9 Plan from Designs for New City Baths, Swanston and Victoria Streets. Conditions of Competition: Designs for, City of Melbourne, 1901

Source City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection

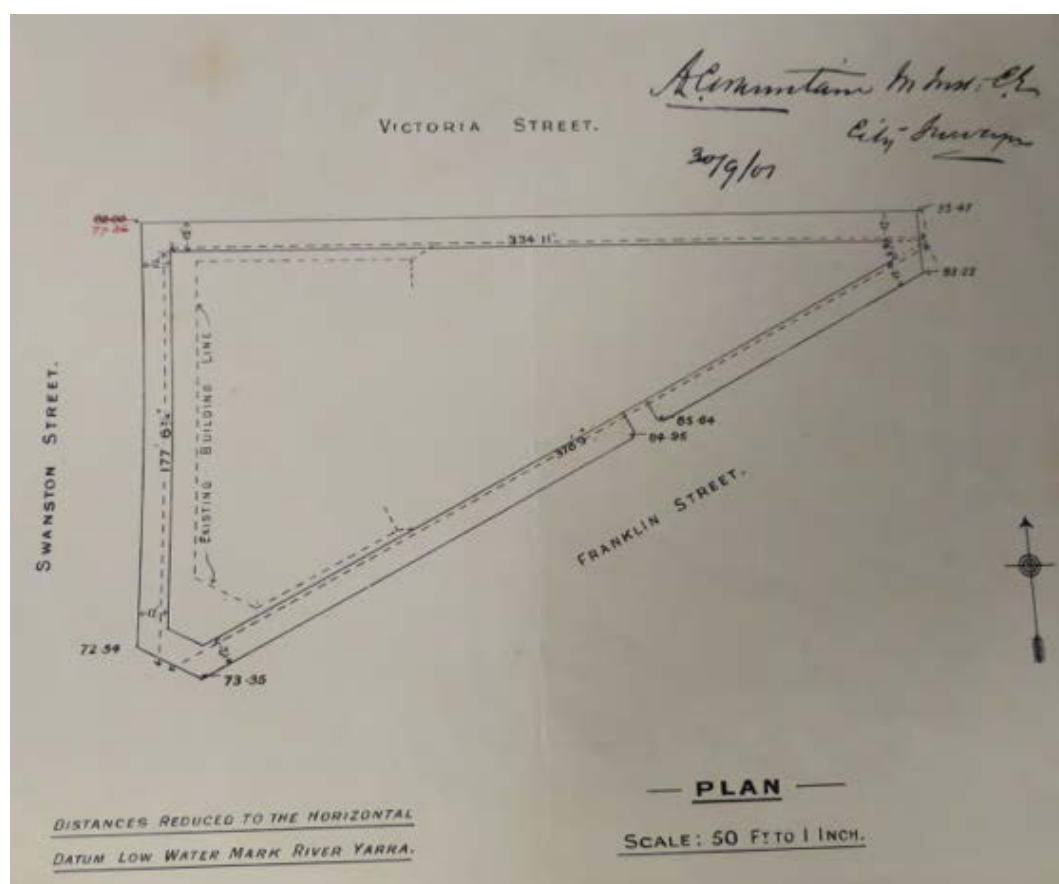




Figure 10 Drawing no. 5, New City Baths Melbourne, J J Clark, 1904, showing the elevation to Swanston Street; the double-storey caretaker's residence is the volume at the far right of the image

Source J.J. & E.J. Clark Collection, 1981.0089, University of Melbourne Archives

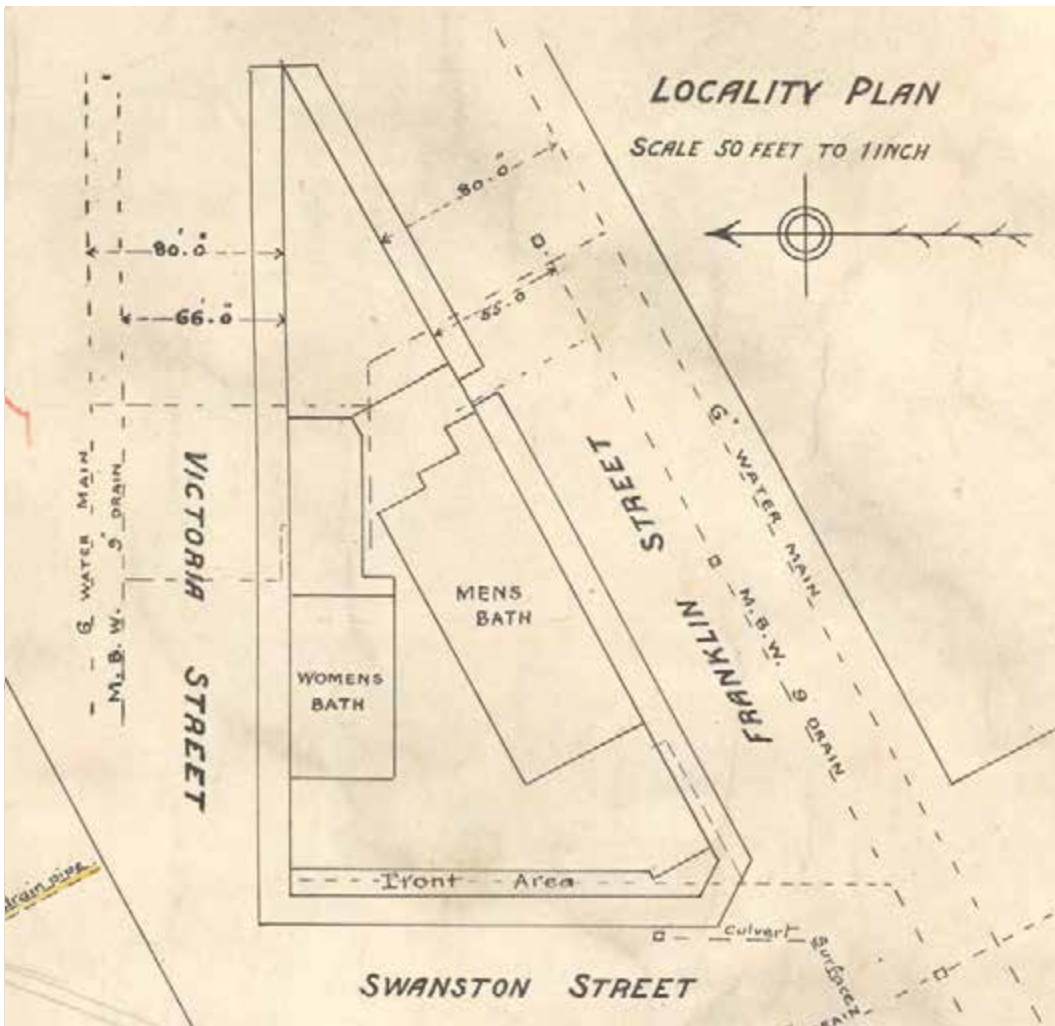


Figure 11 Locality plan on Drawing No. 1, New City Baths Melbourne by J J and E J Clark, 1904

Source J.J. & E.J. Clark Collection, 1981.0089, University of Melbourne Archives

2.4.2 Official opening, 23 March 1904

The City Baths were officially opened on 23 March 1904, by the Lord Mayor, Malcolm D McEacharn, and attended by the Premier Thomas Bent (Figure 15). The Victorian Amateur Swimming Association performed for the ceremony, reinforcing the recreational focus of the new baths. Local newspapers published illustrated articles, featuring the new facilities; and early patronage was high, with over 150,000 attending within the first year.⁴⁵

The new baths incorporated a larger footprint on the corner site than its predecessor, which occupied just the western end of the site on Swanston Street (Figure 7). In contrast, the Clarks' design utilised almost the whole site, leaving just the eastern corner at the intersection of Victoria and Franklin streets as open space (Figure 11).

The baths, when opened, incorporated the two pools, the smaller one for women located adjacent to the Victoria Street wall and the larger men's pool adjacent to Franklin Street. The baths were designed as independent but connected buildings across three levels, with open spaces and light courts, and the genders kept separate at the entry and internally except for the open courtyard and verandah at the centre of the bathhouse, which provided an area between the two pools for patrons to mingle. The administration areas and slipper baths were located near the main entry on Swanston Street, with a self-contained two-storey caretakers residence incorporated into the development at the intersection of Franklin and Swanston streets. Laundry facilities were located to the rear of the women's pool and a water tower was located to the rear of the men's pool. A boiler house with tall chimney was constructed in the eastern section of the site.

Figure 12 Algernon Darge photograph, 1914, showing the Swanston Street elevation, with the original gender-separated entrance

Source State Library of Victoria, National Cash Register Co. Collection



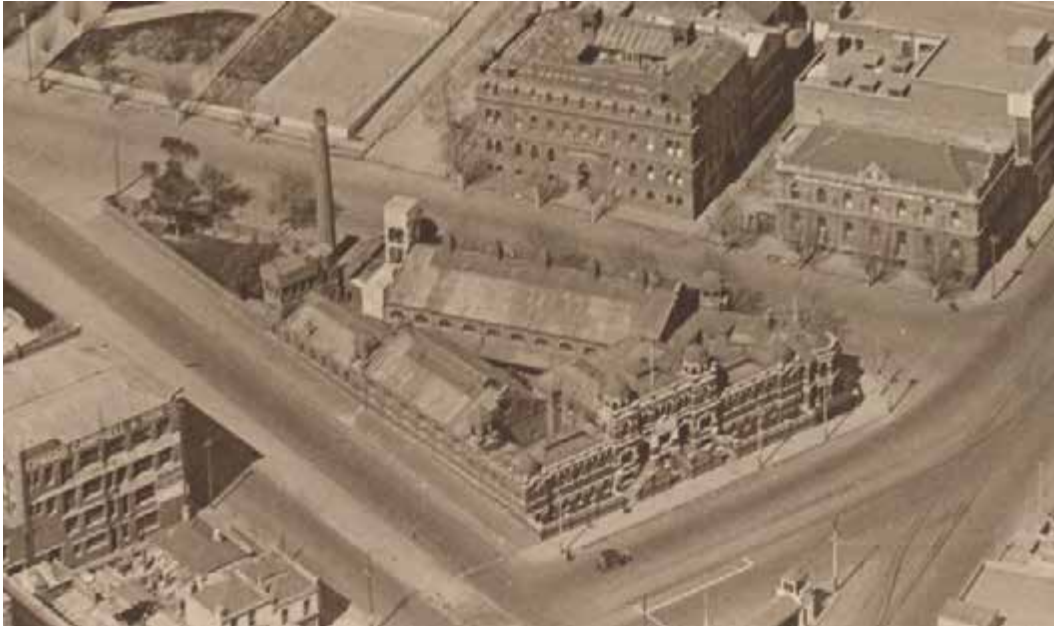


Figure 13 Airspy view of the City Baths, 1927-28, note the undeveloped eastern end (top left) and the separate building components, as internal to the complex

Source State Library of Victoria

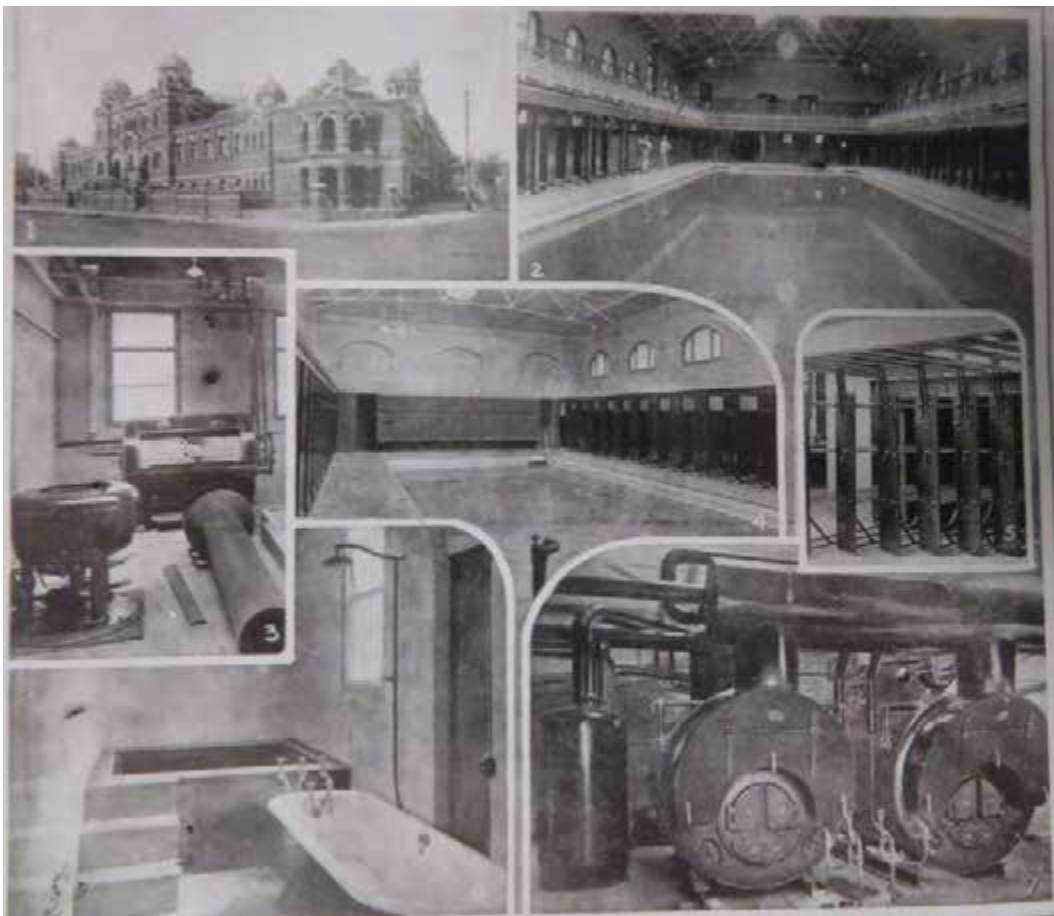


Figure 14 New City Baths, *The Leader*, February 13, 1904, p.36

Source City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection

2.4.3 Gender and class segregation in the new baths

Segregated facilities by both gender and class were key features of the original municipal baths on the subject site (1860-1899) and extended into the Clarks' design of the replacement baths (1904). The separation of the sexes was a Victorian-era characteristic of the new development, maintaining the desire for a distinction between the spheres of private and public worlds.⁴⁶ The gender segregation is clearly evident in the historic plans included at Appendix B.

In simple terms, the women's facilities were concentrated in the northern part of the site, ahead and to the left as one entered the facility via the north (female only) entrance door to the elevated central entrance bay; with the men's facilities concentrated in the southern part of the site, ahead and to the right as one entered the facility via the south (male only) entrance door to the elevated central entrance bay. The separate women's facilities included a waiting room, slipper baths, vestibule, changing rooms or boxes and dedicated pool. The men's facilities largely matched the women's, albeit with the much larger pool and additional spaces such as a club room and the spectator gallery or viewing area at first floor/mezzanine level to the pool. The length of the men's pool (100ft) was double the size of the women's facility (50ft).⁴⁷

The symmetrical presentation of the building to Swanston Street also reflected the segregation of the genders, with the women's and men's slipper baths arranged to either side (left and right) of the entry. Inside, the facilities were separated by an open courtyard (later covered over) providing a spatial division between the genders.

The men's pool was also equipped with sporting features such as Roman Rings, diving boards and a slate waterslide (Figure 18).⁴⁸ This equipment reflected the use of the pool for entertainment and public contests, with the women's pool containing no such features (Figure 19). The inclusion of the spectators gallery surrounding the men's pool, and the club room, also reflected this different emphasis on the men's bathing and pool recreation.

The internal configuration additionally reflected class-based segregation, with second-class facilities located in the basement and first-class on the floor above, with easier access to the main pool. This layout, whilst complying with Victorian-era ideas of class and gender segregation, were also influenced by the site, described by Clark as 'awkward'. In the statement accompanying his design the architect named the steep gradients of both Victoria and Franklin streets as 'difficulties to be contended with'.⁴⁹

Although mixed-gender bathing was slowly introduced as the City Baths grew in popularity, many beach baths were already permitting mixed-bathing when the baths were constructed.⁵⁰ The segregation also had an impact on the ability of women and children learning to swim.⁵¹

When in 1917 the baths Superintendent proposed the introduction of mixed bathing, it was initially rejected by the Council. However, the use of the baths by a Dual Swimming Club, introduced in 1920, demonstrated the popularity of mixed bathing and by 1928, the Council began to trial a mixed bathing session, one night a week during winter.⁵² This soon increased to three nights a week and by 1932, it was enlarged to five nights a week, before opening the men's pool to both genders in 1947, but only after 10 am. The proposal had been to provide mixed bathing all day, however this was opposed by some male season ticket holders.⁵³

Figure 17 Detail of Drawing no.4, showing the gender segregated entries to the baths

Source JJ & E J Clark Collection, 1981.0089, University of Melbourne Archives

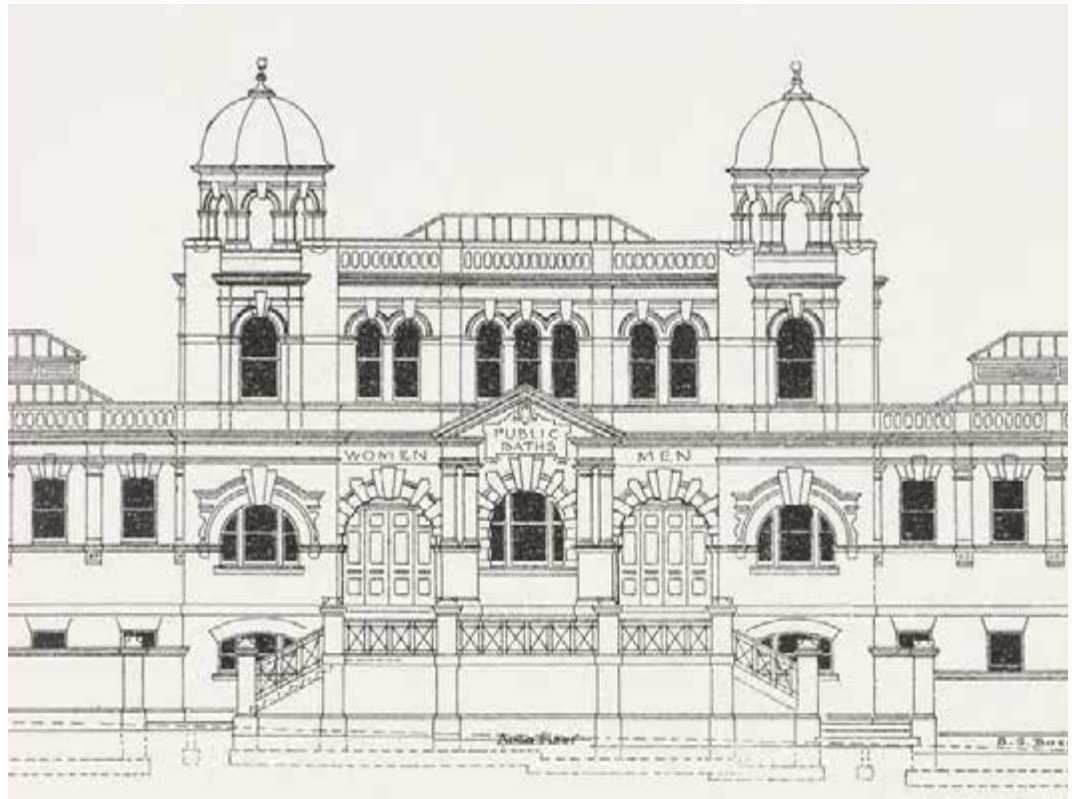
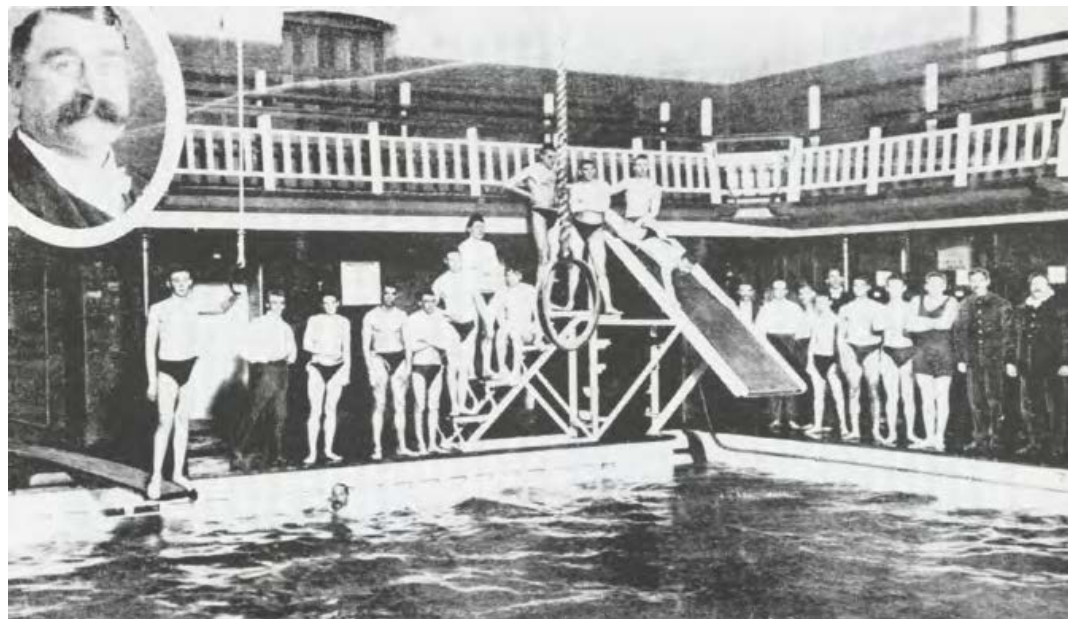


Figure 18 Men's bathing pool, 1904, showing the Roman Rings and slate water slide

Source Jennifer Bailey, *The Great Unwashed*, 1991, p.148



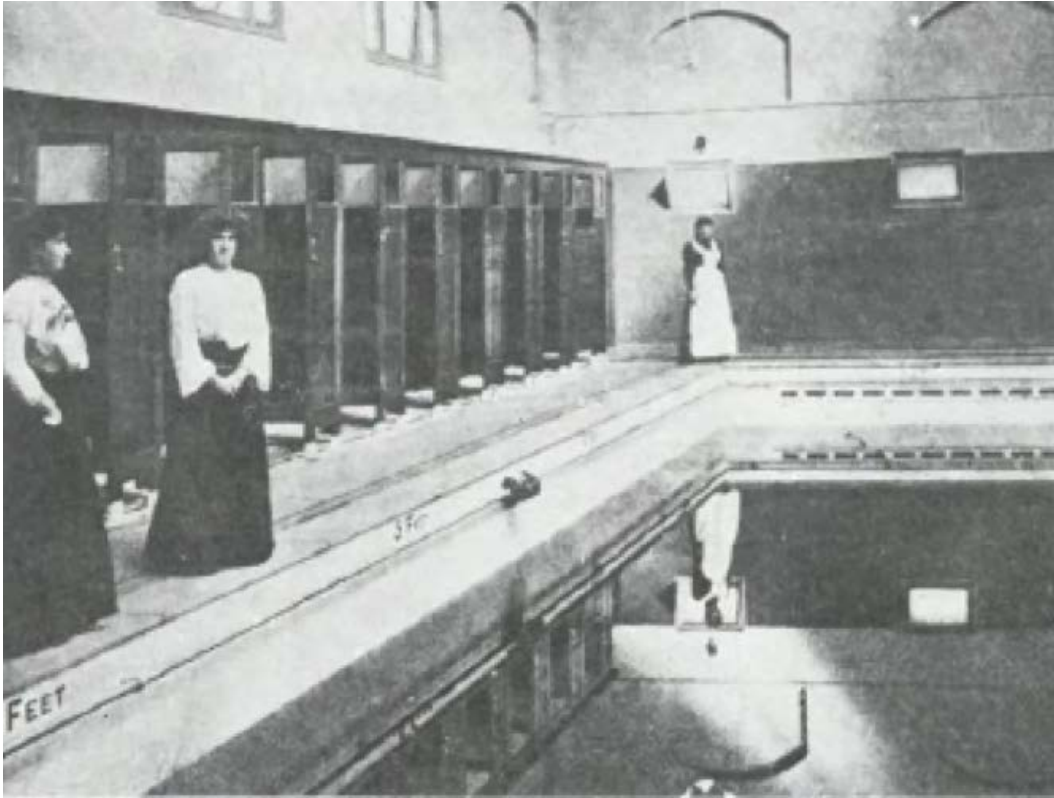


Figure 19 Female attendants in the women's pool, 1904

Source Elisabeth Krien & Cathy Martell, *The History of the Melbourne City Baths*, Ringwood: Waratah Press, 1990, p.5



Figure 20 Women Swimmers at City Baths, 1932

Source *Herald*, 31 March 1932, p.32

Figure 21 Mixed bathing at
City Baths, 1929

Source *Argus*, 3 May
1929, p. 5



Although this change brought the baths closer to contemporary standards of gender equality, the decision to open the larger pool to women, was also taken to address on-going financial problems. It was hoped the increased patronage would help the Council finance other pools that were running at a loss.⁵⁴

The separate entries for men and women remained in place in the mid-twentieth century, when the entry was remodelled to have a single entry at street level. Although women had been allowed to use the men's pool, it wasn't until the smaller pool was taken over for swimming lessons that the pool became accessible to both genders.⁵⁵

2.4.4 Mikvah bath

A key feature of the new baths was the inclusion of a Jewish 'Mikvah' bath (also spelled Mikveh or Micvah), a ritual bath designed for the purification of women.⁵⁶ In 1893, the *Jewish Herald* reported that the East Melbourne Hebrew Congregation had successfully lobbied for permission to use three of the baths for Mikvah bathing.⁵⁷ There was also provision of Mikvah baths in the plans for the new building. The original plans from 1904 had Mikvah baths located in both the women's first class and second class slipper baths areas, labelled on the plans as 'Jewish Bath' (Figure 22), however plans from 1912 suggest only the first class Mikvah bath was built. The inclusion of the Mikvah baths presumably reflected the presence of a sizeable Jewish community in Melbourne, and more specifically the lobbying of City of Melbourne Councillor, Jacob Marks. Reporting in the *Jewish Herald* in 1903 suggests that Councillor Marks influenced the decision in relation to inclusion of a Mikvah bath in the new design.⁵⁸ There was an Alderman Jacobs Marks, who was president of the Melbourne Hebrew Association at the time, but it is unclear whether this was the same person.

For a Mikvah bath to be used for ritual, it must contain a percentage of water derived from a natural source, such as rain water.⁵⁹ The natural source of the water is currently achieved in the Mikvah bath by running the tap water down the terracotta pipe, rather than from rain water or water from a different source, however a photo of the original bath suggests it may have used a different water source (Figure 23).

The Mikvah bath has been renovated a number of times; at one stage the original bath was covered with wooden decking and used for storage. In 2011, it appears to have been returned to the original layout, except for the laying of carpet on the floor (Figure 23 & Figure 24). The Melbourne Jewish Community has requested the use of rain water for the bath, however this has not been a possibility due to practical problems with collection and filtration.⁶⁰

2.4.5 Caretakers at the baths

When the baths opened in 1904, a two-storey caretaker's residence was located at the corner of Swanston and Franklin streets (Figure 25). It had a small fenced garden area, and a fence with a bluestone plinth, brick piers and steel palisades. By 1910, creeper was growing over the fence and other vegetation is evident in the small garden (Figure 26).

By the late 1920s, a second residence had been constructed to the rear (eastern part) of the baths site (Figure 27). It consisted of a two-storey brick building, with three bedrooms, a dining room, living room and kitchen. Archival plans show that the original caretaker's quarters were proposed to be converted to slipper baths in 1915, although it is unclear when this change occurred.

The two-storey brick caretaker's residence to the rear of the baths was demolished during the 1980s renovations.

Figure 22 Detail of the basement plan, showing the proposed location of the Mikvah bath ('Jewish Bath' at centre left) within the women's area of the baths; the Mikvah bath in the first-class slipper bathing area was positioned directly above

Source J.J. & E.J. Clark Collection, 1981.0089, University of Melbourne Archives

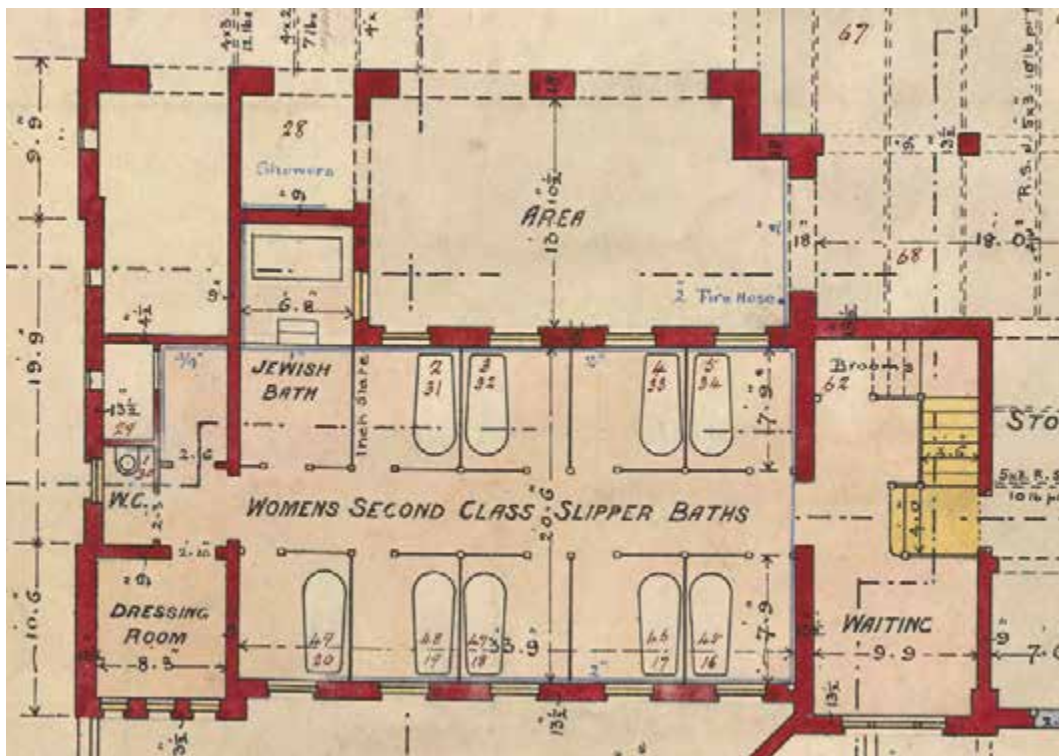


Figure 23 Original Mikvah bath, *The Leader*, February 13, 1904, p.36

Source Source: City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection



Figure 24 Current Mikvah bath, showing the terracotta pipe (beneath the window)

Source Lovell Chen, June 2018



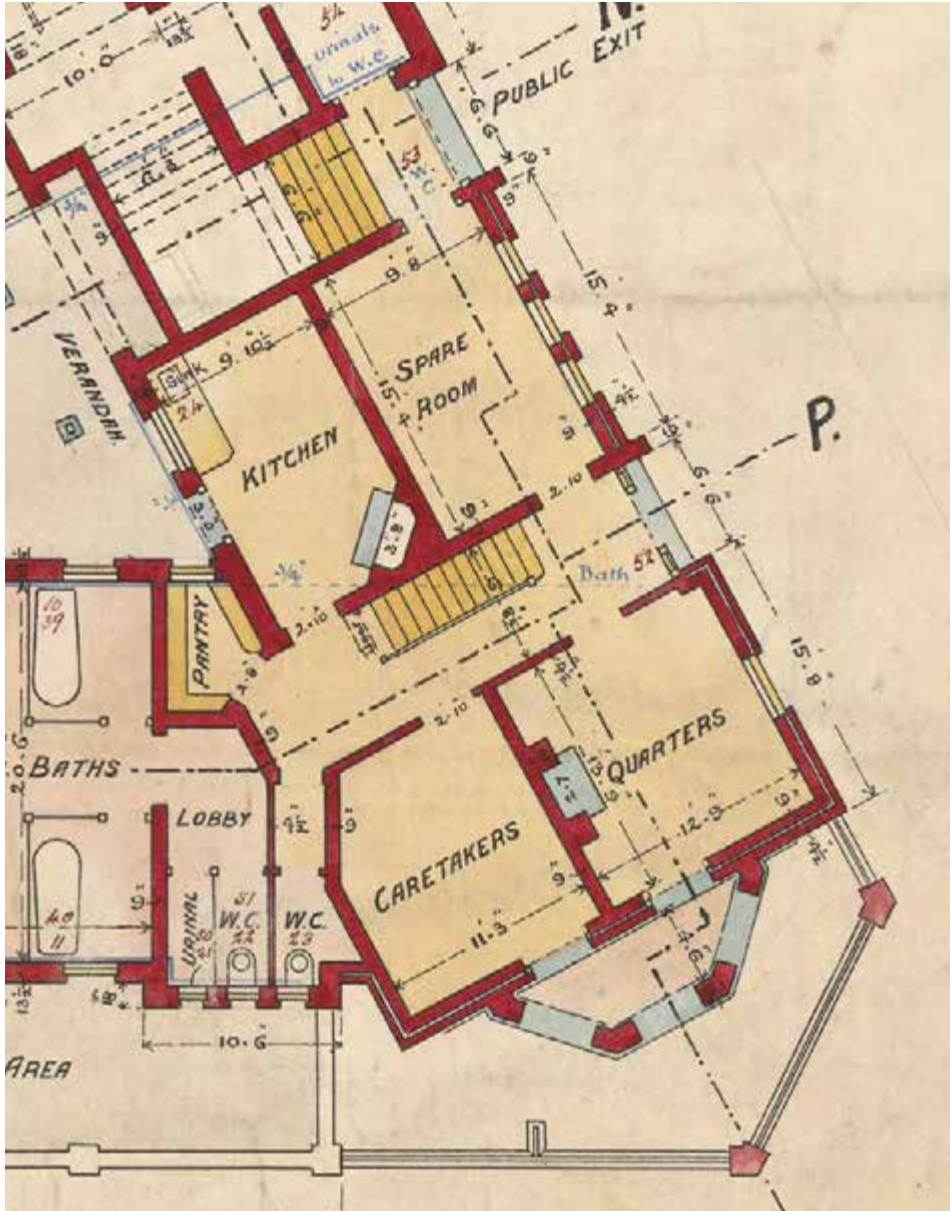


Figure 25 Basement plan of the caretaker's residence, 1904

Source J. & E.J. Clark Collection, 1981.0089, University of Melbourne Archives



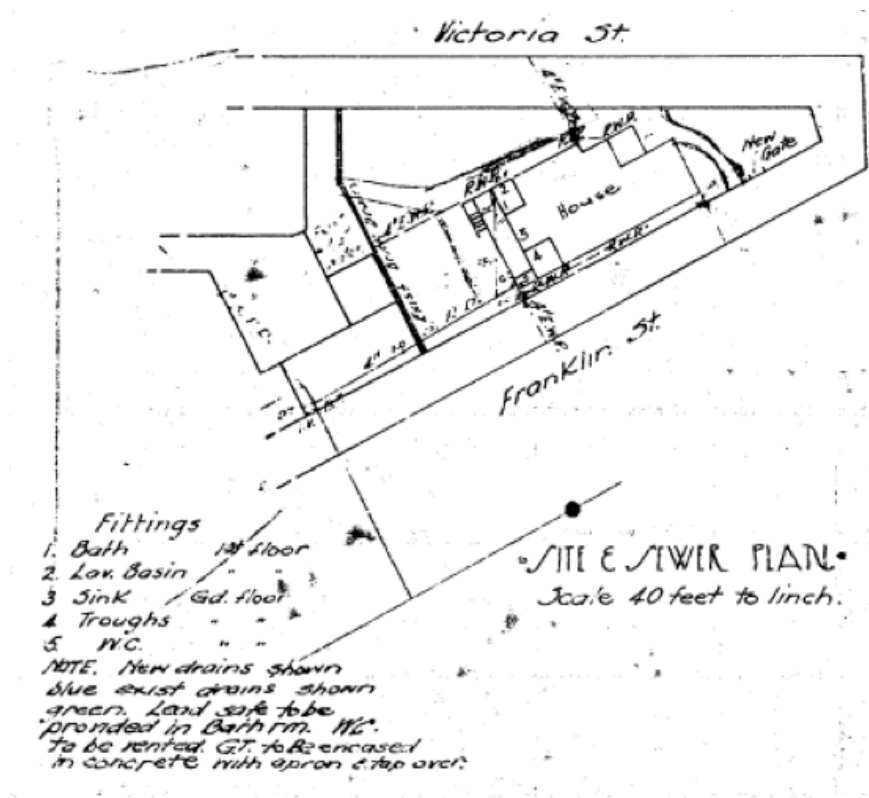
Figure 26 City Baths, with the caretaker's residence (centre image) to the corner Swanston and Franklin streets, c.1910; note the fence with creeper to the small garden area

Source State Library of Victoria



Figure 27 Detail of the brick residence at rear of City Baths, 1929

Source City of Melbourne plan, A190-827



2.5 Use of the baths for recreation

2.5.1 Swimming

Swimming for reasons of health, as well as safety, was being promoted in Melbourne from the late nineteenth century. Drownings in the Yarra River and Port Phillip Bay were common in colonial Melbourne and swimming lessons were available to those who could afford them.⁶¹ Gender segregation at municipal baths did not help to promote swimming, as parents could not together teach their children to swim.⁶²

With the establishment of the Victorian Swimming Association (VSA) in 1893, education about the importance of learning to swim was a priority.⁶³ The promotion of municipal baths for use by swimming clubs for carnivals and swimming lessons, also helped Councils offset the high cost of operating the facilities. Melbourne's Bath and Parks Committee reported that it was confident the new facilities (current City Baths) would attract carnivals and the like with its spectator galleries and electric light.⁶⁴ The Royal Life Saving Society held its First Annual Competition in Life Saving and Swimming at the City Baths on March 27 1912 (Figure 28); and in the 1920s, the baths attracted swimming demonstrations by famous swimmers (Figure 29). Many raised funds for charity, such as the theatrical carnival display raising money for the Queen Victoria Hospital Appeal in 1924.⁶⁵ One staff member who taught swimming lessons at the baths for thirty years, was the first woman to gain the Life Saving Society's diploma.⁶⁶

At a government level, learn to swim campaigns in schools were introduced by the Victorian Education Department in 1916, a result of lobbying by the VSA and Melbourne Swimming Club. The policy was supported by the Coroner, who also recommended swimming lessons be compulsory to address the rise in drownings occurring during the hot summer months.⁶⁷ The introduction of school-based lessons was also likely influenced by criticism of the fitness levels of many World War One recruits, an issue also experienced in the United Kingdom.⁶⁸

In the interwar period, national *Learn-to-Swim* campaigns, led by local newspapers became a feature, with the *Herald's* Learn to Swim campaign beginning in the 1920s. The 1932 campaign was launched by the Lord Mayor of Melbourne at the City Baths, with a swimming carnival raising money for the Lord Mayor's Fund.⁶⁹ The encouragement of swimming as a healthy activity was also supported by Melbourne City Councillor, Frank Beaurepaire, a former Olympic Swimmer, who was elected chairman of the City Council Town Hall and Baths Committee, in 1937.

During World War Two, the war effort at home emphasised health and fitness as an important aspect of national security. A National Fitness Council of Victoria was established in 1941. The City of Melbourne also published fitness booklets (Figure 30).

Despite the fact that the use of private bathing facilities during this period had begun to be outstripped in popularity by the swimming pools, the bathing facilities were still being used. In 1946 it was reported that the City Baths had approximately 100 'ordinary household baths' installed in the area where the Turkish Baths had occupied.⁷⁰ It is very unlikely that the number of baths was as large as reported.

Figure 28 Royal Life Saving Society flyer, 1912

Source City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection



Royal Life Saving Society
Victorian Head Centre.

1367

First Annual Competition
—IN—
Life Saving and Swimming
—TO BE HELD AT—
CITY BATHS, Swanston Street, Melbourne,
(Yellow or White Tram)
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27, 1912,
At 7 p.m.

- 1. Junior Championship** competition for **"Sweyn H Lemme" Cup.**
Teams of Four and Instructor. Under 16. Entry, 4/- team.
- 2. Championship of Victoria.** Competition for **"Treadwell" Shield**
Teams of Four and Instructor. Over 16. Entry, 4/- team.
- 3. Back Stroke** Swimming Race for **Baron Von Bissing Medals.**
100 Yards. Entry, 1/-.
 1. Competitors must swim 100 yards Back Stroke, without using the hands.
 2. The hands must be clasped on chest or abdomen all the way, except when turning.
 3. Competitors must start in the water (no dive). They may hang on to end of bath and push off with feet.
- 4 & 5. Girls' and Boys' All Clothes Races.**
Under 16. 668 yards. Entry 3d. Trophies, Silver Medals. 334 yards Back Stroke (as for "Baron Von Bissing" Race), 334 yards Breast Stroke, clothed as follows:
Boys. Leather boots or shoes, shirt, stockings, and serge or tweed coat and trousers.
Girls. Leather boots or shoes, stockings, bloomers, and serge or tweed blouse and skirt to knees (blouse and skirt may be combined).
- 6. Undressing in Water Competition.** Entry, 6d. Trophy, Silver Medal.
Competitors to enter water clothed in swimming costume, shirt, collar, tie, tweed or serge coat, vest and trousers, socks and leather boots or shoes, laced in at least five holes, and to remove clothing (except swimming costume) while in deep water.

Events Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 6 open only to Members of the R.L.S.S. or affiliated bodies. Nos. 4 and 5 open to all boys or girls under 16 on March 27th, 1912.
Entries, accompanied by Entrance Fees (and in 4 and 5 by statement of age from Teacher or Parent), close with the Hon. Secretary, Royal Life Saving Society, Elsternwick, on Wednesday, 20th March, 1912, at 6 p.m.

Admission: Silver Coin.

ARNOLD P. NEWBY, HON. SECRETARY,
ELSTERNWICK.



Figure 29 Extract from the official program for the International and Australian Championship Swimming Carnival held at City Baths, February 20, 1924

Source State Library of Victoria



Figure 30 City of Melbourne fitness campaign booklet, 1941 (left); Herald Learn-to-Swim Campaign, 1942-43 (right)

Source City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection

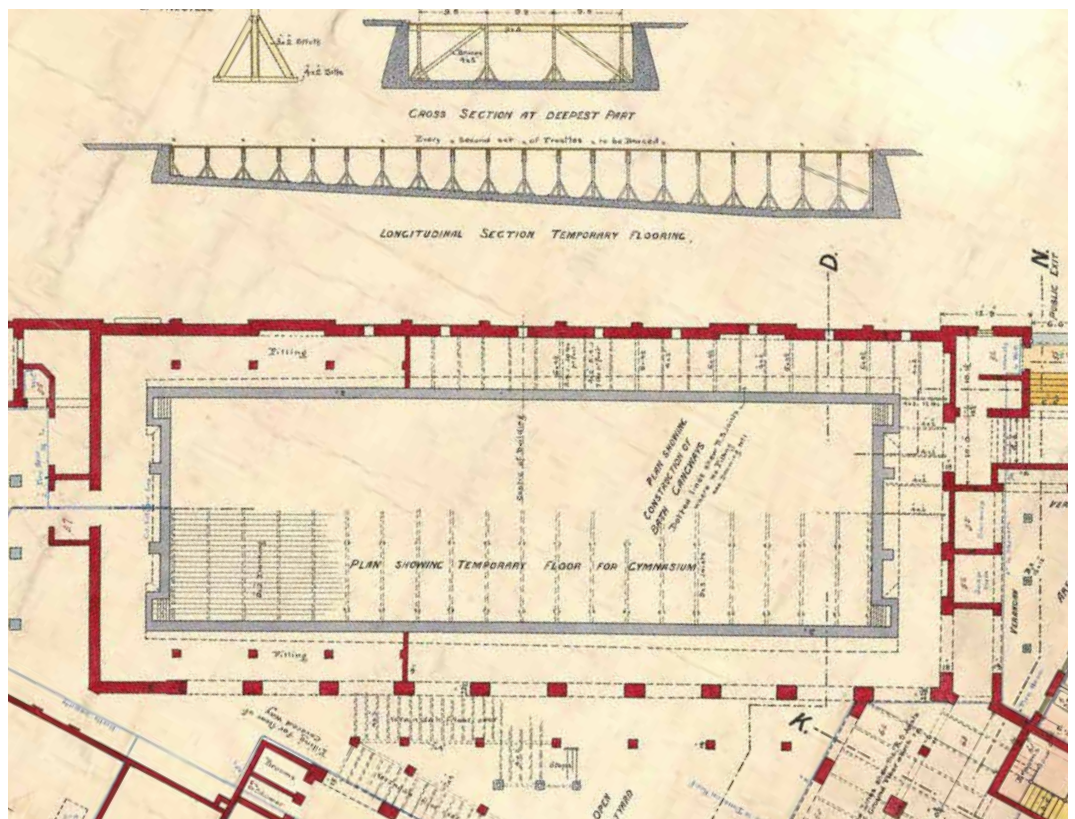
Figure 31 Margaret Begg learning to swim at the City Baths with Mrs A Sinclair instructing, 1946

Source The Story Behind Our City Baths, *Age*, 9 February 1946, p.10



Figure 32 Detail showing the plan for temporary gymnasium flooring in original basement plan, 1904

Source J.J. & E.J. Clark Collection, 1981.0089, University of Melbourne Archives



2.5.2 Gymnasium

The original plans by JJ and EJ Clark in 1904 indicated the intention of providing gymnasium facilities, with the basement plan showing 'temporary floor for gymnasium' on the men's pool (Figure 32). It is unclear if this flooring was ever installed, as it is not indicated on the 1912 plans (see Appendix B). It appears that the provision of gymnasium facilities at the baths did not appear until the mid-century, with the upper and basement floor spaces were leased to tenants in the 1960s.

The creation of extra floor space to the rear of the baths, with the 1980s renovations (discussed later in this chapter) saw the inclusion of additional recreation facilities. These included squash courts which in turn have in part subsequently been modified for different uses, such as group fitness studios. Current fitness programs include yoga, body pump, body combat, zumba and boxing.⁷¹

These diverse and varied recreation and fitness-related programs at the baths reflect ongoing changes in exercise trends since the bath's establishment.

2.6 The 1950s and 1956 Olympic Games

The 1956 Olympic Games were held in Melbourne and played an important role in the fate of the City Baths. When Melbourne was announced in 1949 as having won the right to host the 1956 Olympics, debates began about the state of the Melbourne City Baths. Despite the popularity and promotion of the baths for swimming during the 1930s, the Depression meant that funds were not readily available for maintenance.⁷² In response to suggestions the baths could be used as a venue for the Olympics, the Melbourne City Council's Parks Department declared them to be in 'a disgusting state of neglect'.⁷³ There were proposals to extend the baths to three storeys to accommodate the swimming events, with a pool of Olympic standard on the ground floor and gymnasium training and lecture rooms on the upper floors.⁷⁴ However, the decision was ultimately made to build a new pool for the purpose of the games, and the Olympic Park Pool was eventually built to hold the swimming and pool-based Olympic events. The Olympic sized swimming pool was designed by international competition, with winning architects Kevin Boland, John and Phyllis Murphy, Peter McIntyre and engineer William Irwin designing the pre-tensioned steel frame building in 1954. It was located at Olympic Park, near the Yarra River in Richmond, close to the city. It was used as pool until 1980.

Despite not being an Olympic venue, the City Baths were utilised for events in the lead up to the Games, with the Victorian Winter Championships held there in 1954.⁷⁵ These pre-Games activities necessitated some much needed maintenance and repairs, including the temporary closure of the pools in November 1950.⁷⁶ The 1956 Olympics caused a surge in popularity of swimming, but even with this rising interest, the various public baths and pools managed by Melbourne City Council were losing money in the 1950s. In 1952, for example, four Council-owned and operated pools had a total loss of £11,588, with the City Bath losing the largest amount of £7,733.⁷⁷

The increased popularity of swimming also resulted in many new suburban pools being constructed, again resulting in reduced numbers using the City Baths. In the period immediately after the Games, new swimming pool facilities included the Beaurepaire Pool at the University of Melbourne in 1957. More generally, in the period 1945 to 1975, public municipal pools in Victoria increased nearly four-fold to approximately thirty-five pools.⁷⁸ Additionally, many of the pre-war public baths were remodelled or rebuilt in this period including the Fitzroy pool, the Richmond baths, and the City of Box Hill and Ashburton pools.

2.7 Renovations, 1950s and 1960s

Renovations undertaken at the City Baths in the post-war period were influenced by a need to attract patrons back to the facility. The popularity of the baths was in decline, and financial losses were increasing. The baths were repaired and maintained in a 'piecemeal' fashion, however by the early 1960s, major work was required.⁷⁹

In 1955, the works reflected the further de-segregation of the two pools, with the former women's entry converted into a waiting room and entry to all pools was by way of the southern (formerly men's) entry. The light court to the east of the women's slipper baths was converted into women's locker rooms and showers. The original verandahs around the courtyard were also removed at this time, and a sundeck installed on the roof.⁸⁰

The first major change to the original façade of the building occurred in the 1960s, when the original entrance was reconfigured, removing the stairs and creating the main entry at street level on Swanston Street (Figure 33 and Figure 34). As part of these works, the separate entries for men and women were converted to first floor windows and an awning was introduced over the new street level entry. The original brick fence to Swanston Street was also removed and replaced with a concrete blockwork fence. These changes were reversed in the 1980s (see below), when the baths underwent a further extensive phase of works and development, with the form of the original entrance in part reintroduced (Figure 35).

In addition to the remodelled entrance, the dividing wall between the two original gender specific vestibules was removed, effectively removing the last remaining physical evidence of gender segregation at the baths (except for segregated changing facilities and toilets).

With the new entrance created at street level, the second-class bathing facilities were removed. The women's slipper baths were converted into a medical clinic, with a waiting area, consulting rooms and office space. The drawings suggest the space was to be used as an obesity clinic but it is unclear whether this was the use of the space after the renovations (Figure 38). A barber shop was located immediately adjacent to the new entry and a milk bar and café off Swanston Street and in the space formerly used as the caretaker's residence (Figure 36 & Figure 37). These new tenanted spaces allowed the baths to collect more revenue. The upper floor was leased to Michael Hunt, a body builder, who had represented Australia in swimming in the Commonwealth Games and won the Mr Australia competition in 1960. He ran a gym out of the City Baths in the early to mid-1960s until the 1970s, which had reciprocal rights to the city baths swimming and sauna facilities.⁸¹

Figure 33 Proposed alteration to Main Entrance to City Baths, City Architect's Department, 1962

Source City of Melbourne plan, A109-835

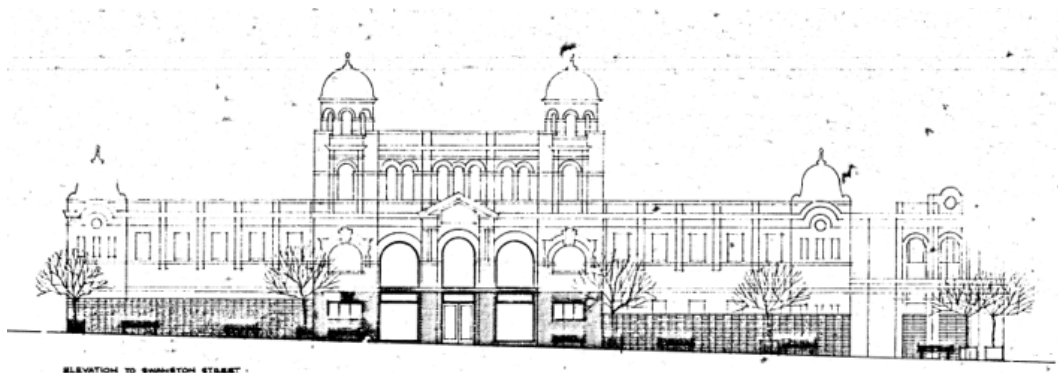




Figure 34 The altered entry, with awning, photographed in the early 1980s

Source State Library of Victoria



Figure 35 Partly reintroduced City Baths entry, c.1990s

Source Rennie Ellis Collection, State Library of Victoria

Figure 36 The Milk Bar and Coffee Lounge sign on the former caretaker's residence, c.1980

Source City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection



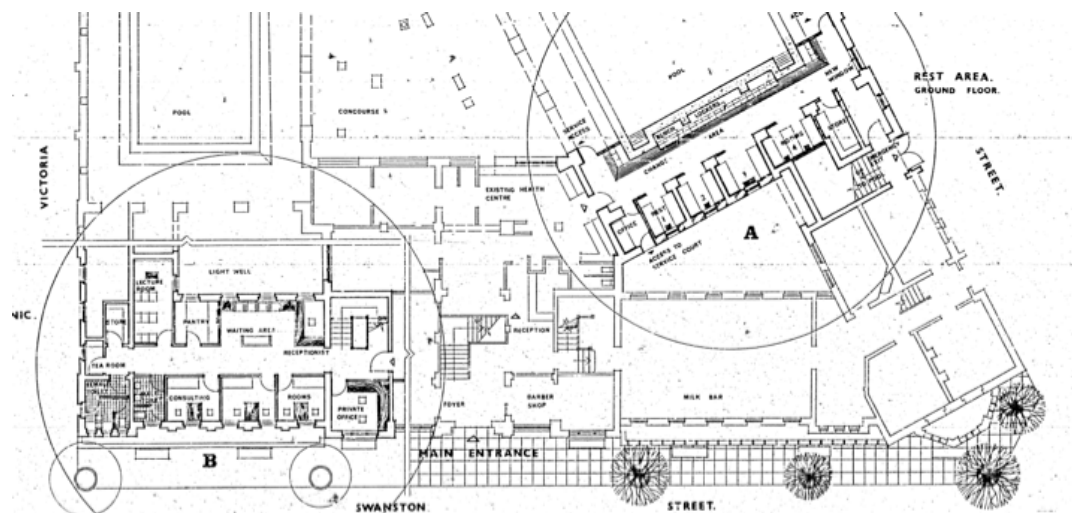
Figure 37 Undated image showing the concrete blockwork fence installed to the Swanston Street boundary in the 1960s works

Source City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection



Figure 38 Proposed rest rooms and obesity clinic, City Baths, Melbourne, 1968

Source City of Melbourne plan, A109-839



2.8 Baths under threat, 1970s

Despite the modifications made in the 1960s, patronage at the baths continued to decrease in the 1970s. The City Council considered closing and demolishing the baths in the early 1970s, however this move coincided with a broader heritage campaign in Melbourne that had begun with the establishment of the National Trust in 1959. Many buildings in the city were under threat of demolition and community campaigns were established to save Melbourne's heritage including the Regent Theatre, Queen Victorian Markets, and Rialto and Olderfleet buildings.⁸²

The union for construction workers on the large building projects, the Builders Labourers Federation (BLF) stepped in and declared the baths the 'Workers Baths' in 1972, placing a 'black ban' on any work on this site.⁸³ Norm Gallagher, the secretary of the BLF, was a frequent user of the baths, with the union's Carlton headquarters located around the corner at 11 Lygon Street, Carlton. Gallagher was not the only union official to use the baths, located close to many union headquarters in Carlton; this included the Victorian Trades Hall, the Council of which coordinated a Union Swimming Club in 1975, presumably as part of the campaign to save and support the baths.⁸⁴ It was not the first time Trades Hall had engaged with the City Baths. In 1909, the secretary of the Hall, Stephen Barker, had written to the Baths to complain about the working conditions of pool attendants. He argued that the closed roof was a trying feature for workers and that they should consider a sliding roof to allow smells to escape the pool area.⁸⁵

In March 1980, the Melbourne City Baths was added to the (then) Historic Buildings Register, predecessor of the Victorian Heritage Register, due to being of architectural and historical significance to the State of Victoria.⁸⁶

2.9 Major renovations, 1981-83

After the heritage listing of the City Baths, the building was still in need of urgent refurbishment. The condition of the baths had deteriorated to the point that two people fell through the concourse.⁸⁷ Additionally, the roof of the baths was reported to have been 'in such a bad condition that it could only be described as dangerous'.⁸⁸ The heritage status of the building meant that the Melbourne City Council had to seriously consider how to best refurbish the baths, as demolition was not an option.

The Council commissioned architects Kevin Greenhatch and Gunn Hayball (in association) to design possibilities to meet the requirements of the heritage listing – that the pool hall and slipper baths were to be retained, the original façade and entry stairs reinstated, the chimney retained and to blend any additional buildings to the original design.⁸⁹ The baths underwent substantial upgrades as part of these works, with the building program extended out to the rear (eastern) section of the site. The latter had largely remained undeveloped, save for the later brick caretaker's residence, which was removed with the 1980s works.

A lot of the earlier fabric was removed in the works, which is revealed through extensive photographic documentation of demolition and rebuilding. Select of these photographs are included in this report (Figure 43-47). The physical changes to the baths during this period were extensive and are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. The partial reinstatement of the form of the original entry was undertaken, with single entry, rather than separate entries for each gender (Figure 39 - Figure 40); and the entrance steps as put back did not follow the exact form and placement of the original.

Changes in recreational trends were reflected in the extension and upgrade of the baths. Six squash courts were added and a fully equipped gymnasium, as well as spa and sauna facilities. The total cost of the works was \$4 million. The upgraded facility was opened on 14 August 1983 by the Lord Mayor, Bill Gardner. The baths also won a restoration award from the Royal Institute of Architects in 1984.⁹⁰

Figure 39 A photograph taken during works in the early 1980s to remove the 1960s façade

Source City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection



Figure 40 The rebuilding of the stepped entry on Swanston Street, early 1980s

Source City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection





Figure 41 The rebuilt façade, c.1990s

Source Rennie Ellis Collection, State Library of Victoria



Figure 42 Main pool, c.1990s

Source Rennie Ellis Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria

FIGURE 43 WORKS TO THE CENTRAL COURTYARD, EARLY 1980S
SOURCE CITY OF MELBOURNE ART AND HERITAGE COLLECTION





FIGURE 44 THE MAIN POOL IS RESURFACED, EARLY 1980S

SOURCE CITY OF MELBOURNE ART AND HERITAGE COLLECTION

FIGURE 45 WOMENS POOL DURING RENOVATIONS, EARLY 1980S
SOURCE CITY OF MELBOURNE ART AND HERITAGE COLLECTION



FIGURE 46 WOMENS POOL DURING RENOVATIONS, EARLY 1980S, WITH THE CHANGING BOXES REMOVED
SOURCE CITY OF MELBOURNE ART AND HERITAGE COLLECTION



FIGURE 47 THE FRANKLIN STREET ELEVATION SHOWING THE WATER TOWER, NOW REMOVED, C.1982
SOURCE CITY OF MELBOURNE ART AND HERITAGE COLLECTION

2.10 Today

Since the major renovations of the early 1980s, the City Baths has undergone periodic upgrades to maintain the facility and to keep up with exercise trends. The gymnasium facilities constructed in the 1980s have been adapted to reflect the what is popular in fitness, reverting the squash courts to group fitness studios. Likewise, the tenanted areas on the basement level have been adapted for use as consultation rooms and retail spaces. The original slipper baths area on the ground floor is currently used for storage, although it has previously been used as a tenanted space. The Mikvah bath is still open to booked for the Jewish community, after it was upgraded in 2011.

As a City of Melbourne community facility, the baths have also been used for public events outside their remit of recreation and swimming. Arts events such as light installation during the White Night public arts event help to reinforce the building's status as an iconic Melbourne venue.

As noted in Chapter 1, the new CBD North railway station is set to open in several years with an entrance located adjacent to the City Baths. Due to this, an increase in visitation to the baths is expected, along with an increase in demand for the type and number of services provided by the baths. As has occurred throughout its history, the City baths will endeavour to meet and respond to the ongoing changing community demands for bathing-related recreation and associated fitness programs.

Figure 48 The light installation during White Night in February 2016

Source The Herald Sun



3.0 PHYSICAL ANALYSIS

The following considers the built fabric of the Melbourne City Baths, constructed in 1903-4 to designs by J J and E J Clark; and additions to its east constructed in 1981-3 to designs by Kevin Greenhatch and Gunn Hayball (architects in association). It is based on a physical investigation of the site undertaken during visits conducted in July and August 2018. All parts of the building components were inspected with the exception of those subfloor areas that have not been adapted to allow straightforward access and most of the roof. A selection of architectural drawings including those from the 1904 design prepared by J J and E J Clark are provided at Appendix B to this CMP, and identified below in brackets.

3.1 Context

The City Baths occupies the entirety of a triangular city block bounded by Franklin, Swanston and Victoria streets at the northern end of Melbourne’s Central Business District. As a consequence of its island site, it is understood as a building in the round. The surrounding area has been substantially redeveloped since the construction of the City Baths and, today, the area is characterised by buildings of substantial height. Buildings on the opposite side of Swanston Street include the 46-level Verve Apartments at 497 Swanston Street (Figure 49) and the PDG office block to rising to 17 storeys at 501 Swanston Street. Built form to the north is lower (Figure 50) but includes the nine storey RMIT Design Hub at 100 Victoria Street along with offices of three to six storeys to Victoria Street. RMIT buildings at 414-18 Swanston Street (Figure 49) are located on the opposite side of Franklin Street to the south of the baths.

Immediately to the south of the baths, the new State Library Station is under construction. The station will be located under Swanston Street, between La Trobe Street and Franklin Street. At street level, the main entrance will be located near the corner of Swanston and La Trobe streets, providing direct access to RMIT and the State Library of Victoria. However, another entrance will be located on Franklin Street near the corner of Swanston Street providing an exit adjacent to the Melbourne City Baths.



Figure 49 Verve Apartment, 497 Swanston Street (at left), City Bath with RMIT buildings, 414-18 Swanston Street to the south (at right)

Figure 50 The intersection of Swanston and Victoria streets with the City Baths visible at right



Figure 51 Original roof cladding to the baths, prior to its replacement during the 1981-3 works

Source City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection



3.2 Structure

The subject site slopes downwards from the intersection of Franklin and Victoria streets towards the Swanston Street frontage. So much so, that the ground floor level in the eastern sections of the site are situated a full floor level above the footpath to Swanston Street and the 'basement level' is located at street level along the Swanston Street frontage. The ground floor was constructed as an elevated platform raised on an arcuated masonry structure founded on brick piers in the basement. The approach created substantial sub-floor areas particularly in the western sections of the site and required minimal excavation for the two pools which were constructed as free-standing concrete elements in the subfloor spaces. Floors at ground floor level comprised concrete slabs. Those to the upper floors were timber framed and clad. Roofs to larger areas such as the first floor slipper baths or the wash-house were raised on timber trusses bearing on perimeter masonry walls. Roofs to the two pools utilised steel trusses created the wide, column free spans found in the pool enclosures. Roofs were clad externally in roll-jointed steel roofing (Figure 51). This was replaced with a similar modern product during the 1981-3 works. Cupolas were framed in timber and clad in steel shingles; the latter largely survive as original cladding.

3.3 Developmental history

The City Baths have undergone periodic change throughout the twentieth century, responding to upgrading or ongoing maintenance of the facilities or as a response to social changes and pressure for increased space. While upgrades and modifications have been undertaken on a more or less continuous basis, five key periods in the physical development of the Melbourne City Baths have produced the facility present on the site today. These are:

- On completion of the building in 1904, the facility presented as a sequence of independent but connected building volumes around the perimeter of the site, providing more or less separate, facilities for each gender. Key entry, administration and bath-house facilities were provided in a long wing to Swanston Street with separate men's and women's slipper baths to the south and north of the entry, respectively. A self-contained, two-storey caretaker's residence was provided at the intersection of Franklin and Swanston streets. The women's pool was situated in a separate volume to Victoria Street with a wash-house and laundry facilities for the baths located to its rear (east). A brick water tower to Victoria Street terminated the eastern end of the Victoria Street facade. The larger, men's pool addressed Franklin Street with a second water tower to its rear (east). A boiler house was constructed as an independent structure with tall chimney at the eastern end of the group. The construction of the building as a series of discrete volumes around the perimeter of the site created a small triangular courtyard in the centre which provided the only space where genders could mix. External verandahs to the pool buildings provided shaded seating areas around the sunken courtyard which was situated, more or less, at natural ground level. Two smaller unbuilt areas to the rear (east) of the bath-houses served as light courts.

- Some minor alterations were undertaken through the interwar period. These included: the conversion of the Turkish baths into additional slipper baths in 1923;⁹¹ the installation of a water purification system in the 1920s;⁹² and the construction of a second brick caretaker's residence to rear (east) of the men's baths in 1929 (A109-827). This two-storey structure is visible in the aerial photograph of 1945 (as reproduced in Chapter 2).
- Further works were undertaken in 1955 by Melbourne City Architect's Department. These reflecting the de-segregation of the two pools and an expansion of the facilities provided at the City Baths. The former women's entry was converted into a waiting room and entry to all pools was by way of the southern (formerly men's) entry. De-segregation allowed substantial internal re-planning at ground floor level - notably the conversion of part of the vestibule and the light court to the east of the women's slipper baths into women's locker rooms and showers. Likewise, the towel store and laundry were converted into men's change rooms. The floor level of the sunken triangular courtyard at the centre of the building was raised as part of these works with a concrete floor on brick piers constructed and tiled. Verandahs around the courtyard were removed. A roof/sundeck was constructed above this area below the eaves of the adjacent pool enclosures (A109-830).
- Major changes were undertaken in the 1960s, when the ground floor entry to the baths was removed and a single, street-level entry from Swanston Street was created. The street wall to Swanston Street was rebuilt in blockwork. A new gym was created in the subfloor space beneath the vestibule (A109-838). Spaces within the original caretaker's residence were incorporated into the public areas of the baths providing showers and slipper baths at ground floor level (A109-834). In addition to the remodelled entrance, the dividing wall between the two vestibules was removed. The dressing room facilities were also modernised with new lockers provided and the rooftop sundeck extended.⁹³ With the new entrance created at street level, the second-class bathing facilities were removed. The women's slipper bath-house was converted into a medical clinic, with a waiting area, consulting rooms and office space. A milk bar (now basement café) to Swanson Street was created as part of these works or shortly afterwards. The upper level sun deck was extended to the west.
- The most substantial changes to the facility occurred in the 1980s when the eastern sections of the site were cleared for redevelopment. The second caretaker's residence and the boiler house (with the exception of its chimney) were demolished (Figure 52) and the building group was extended eastwards to their current volume and footprint. The new rear wing included, six new squash courts, a new plant room and gymnasia. Conversion of existing laundry into changerooms was undertaken. The roof deck of 1955 was demolished and the extant enclosed mezzanine level was constructed (A106-228). The key external change was the demolition of the 1960s entrance canopy (Figure 53) and the reinstatement of an entry at the first floor level accessed via a grand staircase recalling that of Clark's original design. The 1960s blockwork wall along the Swanston Street elevation was demolished as part of these works and the extant fence to an interpretative masonry and cast iron design was constructed. Roofs over the two pools were rebuilt in modern materials as part of these works. Removal of signage panels (presumably by sandblasting) damaged walls at ground floor level of corner pavilions to Swanston Street, with the damaged brickwork rendered over. The internal light courts were infilled (Figure 54).

3.4 Physical description

The western sections of the Melbourne City Baths are substantially intact externally with changes to the front entry being the key change. As discussed above, building components to the eastern sections of the site were substantially demolished and rebuilt in 1981-3. Internally, multiple programmes of adaptation have been undertaken and the original segregated arrangement with separate facilities for men and women provided to either side of a central 'dividing line' is no longer legible.

3.4.1 Exterior

The City Baths was constructed as a sequence of attached, but otherwise independent, building volumes around the perimeter of its triangular site. Buildings in the group were unified by their consistent Edwardian Baroque expression incorporating red brick and contrasting cement-rendered mouldings beneath a theatrical roofscape of cupola-crowned belvederes and balustraded parapets.



Figure 52 Front setback to Swanston Street during 1981-3 works

Source City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection



FIGURE 54 WORKS IN BASEMENT LIGHT COURT PRIOR TO CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLUNGE POOL AT GROUND FLOOR LEVEL

SOURCE CITY OF MELBOURNE ART AND HERITAGE COLLECTION



FIGURE 53 THE BOILER HOUSE WAS DEMOLISHED DURING THE 1981-3 WORKS

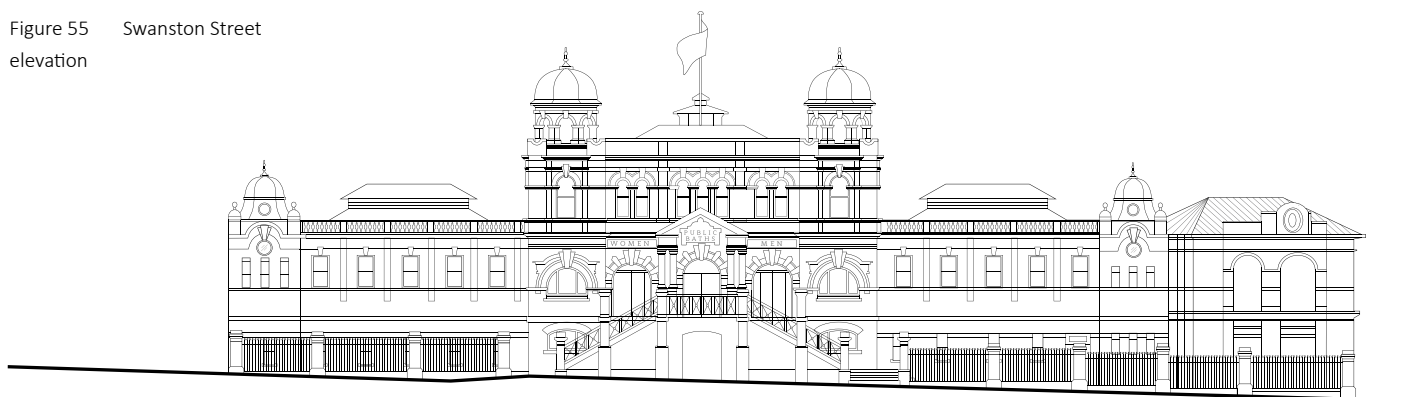
SOURCE CITY OF MELBOURNE ART AND HERITAGE COLLECTION

Swanston Street facade

The Swanston Street facade presents an institutional demeanour to the street (Figure 56, Figure 57). It comprises a wide red brick volume enlivened by a three-storey central pavilion and more modest pavilion forms to either end.

The building is set back from the street creating slightly-sunken light courts to basement windows to either side of a grand staircase providing access to the main entry located one level above the footpath (Figure 59b). The stairs incorporate two symmetrical flights leading to a landing at the entry. Basement entry is provided by a doorway located between the two flights. The front entries, stairs and fence were constructed in 1981-83 and are of a broadly similar configuration to that of the original design - although the 1904 Clark design was wider and did not contain a basement entrance at footpath level. A fence of red brick and cast iron replaced the original masonry wall along Swanston Street in 1981-3. A fire egress door was constructed in the northernmost sections of the basement facade as part of the 1981-3 works.

Figure 55 Swanston Street elevation



SWANSTON STREET



The three-storey central entrance pavilion is particularly ornate with overpainted rendered elements set against a background of tuck-pointed red brick to achieve an effect sometimes described as ‘blood and bandages’. Detailing at ground floor level (above basement level) retains the original central, temple-fronted entry incorporating a broken pediment detail which incorporates the signage ‘PUBLIC BATHS (Figure 57). While this provides the key point of access to the building today, its role was originally decorative, incorporating a window and providing a degree of separation between the male and female entrances to its north and south. The original entries to the two baths were identified by arch-headed openings emphasised by banded voussoirs recalling Moorish sources. These incorporated signage above denoting the ‘MEN’S’ and ‘WOMEN’S’ entries which survives. These entries have since been converted into windows. The central pavilion terminates at tall corner towers rising above the eaves line to belvederes crowned with shingle-roofed cupolas (Figure 58). Two-storey wings flanking the central pavilion are more restrained, comprising regular arrangements of timber sliding sash windows at ground floor and basement levels. These terminate at more-modest corner pavilions, again incorporating roof-level belvederes with cupolas.

The various building volumes are unified by an unusual and inventive string course at ground floor ceiling level terminating at either end in an ox-bow arrangement arching above oculus windows in the corner pavilions. Arches and lintels throughout the building incorporate the exaggerated keystone detail that came to define the Edwardian Baroque. Tall, steeply-pitched roofs with steel ridge ventilators are located above the central pavilion and above the flanking wings.

Apart from the extensive works to the entry and stairs, the Swanston Street façade survives largely intact. In some instances, damage and alterations to brickworks have been ‘covered over’ with plain rendered panels, overpainted to match the adjacent brickwork (Figure 59b, Figure 60a). These are evident in the central sections of the corner pavilions where painted signage was removed in 1981-3 (presumably by sandblasting) and in the infilled sections of the two entries.

A two-storey former caretaker’s residence is located at the corner of Swanston and Flinders streets (Figure 59a). Despite its role within the institutional group, it adopts a residential demeanour with a canted two-storey bay to the street. Entry is by way of a doorway from Franklin Street. The residence reiterates the ‘blood and bandages’ demeanour of the Swanston Street façade more broadly albeit in a more understated manner. Detailing to the canted bay adopts a simpler arcuated expression without the theatrical decorative elements found elsewhere on the building. The residence originally had a small garden to its front.



Figure 56 Melbourne City Baths, Swanston Street façade

Figure 57 Melbourne City Baths, upper façade to Swanston Street

Figure 58 Cupola to Swanston Street façade

Figure 59 (a) Swanston Street façade: caretaker’s residence; (b) northern stairs to ground floor entry with rendered patches to brickwork evident at basement and ground floor levels

Figure 60 (a) Swanston Street façade: northernmost pavilion with rendered finish to damaged brickwork evident; (b) front setback area

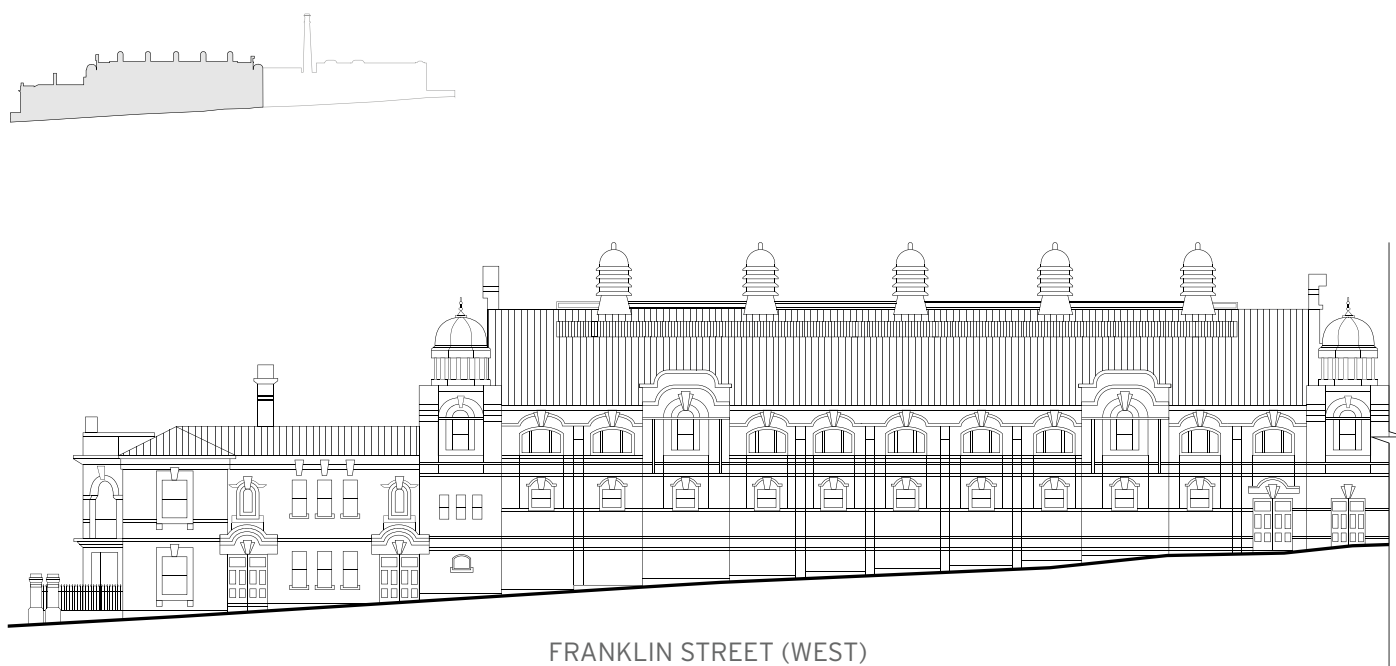


Franklin Street elevation

The Franklin Street elevation of the City Baths presents a more or less continuous two-storey elevation to the street. The western sections of the elevation are substantially intact to their original state with the caretaker's residence and the street wall of the men's pool largely unaltered externally. A water tower, originally located near the centre of this elevation, was demolished in 1981-3 (Figure 63). A freestanding boiler house further to the east was (with exception of its chimney) also demolished to allow the extant basement plant area to be constructed. Consequently, the Franklin Street elevation presents as a building of two halves dating from 1904 and 1981-3 respectively - although the transition between the two is somewhat confused as a consequence of the retained chimney within, what is otherwise 1880s fabric.

The southern facade of the caretaker's residence presents as a reasonably sophisticated residential design with a hipped roof to the corner and the balance of the building expressed as a rear wing. Its simple Franklin Street façade adopts an understated expression which nonetheless incorporates the exaggerated keystone details that underpin the Baroque expression of the building. While the building is expressed externally in a grand manner, suggesting an expansive residence, the volume incorporated a number of support areas associated with the men's pool and the residential areas, were, as a consequence, reasonably modest. The basement areas within the former residence have been converted into a café (Figure 64a). Some modest changes to door joinery have occurred to facilitate public access. A larger public entry to the east of the cafe entry (now a fire escape) survives (Figure 64b). Joinery to these double doors appear to be a reproduction of, or at least inspired by, the original joinery.

Figure 61 Franklin Street elevation



The southern elevation of the former men's pool constitutes the key element to Franklin Street. It generally presents a walled expression to the street with window openings high above the street. Nonetheless, it is highly ornamented façade incorporating exaggerated keystone detailing over doors and windows. Its steel-clad roofing was replaced in a similar modern material as part of the 1981-3 works and incorporates steel roof ventilators (Figure 66).

The eastern sections of the Franklin Street façade comprise additions dating from c. 1981-3 and are more modern and more straightforward than original sections of the building. These are finished in red brick and continue the detailing of the earlier buildings - notably its string courses - to a limited extent and are legible as later elements to a sympathetic design.

As noted above, they incorporate the red brick chimney of the original boiler house. The lower sections and basement of the additions largely comprise tall squash court spaces. These are expressed externally as large expanses of plain brickwork unbroken apart from simple string courses. Well-lit open studios at first floor level are created through the use of steel-framed, multi-paned windows. A small plant yard is provided near the eastern end of the building (Figure 68a, Figure 68b and Figure 71). A small triangular section of land at the extreme eastern end of the site provides a small landscaped area (Figure 68b).

Figure 62 Franklin Street elevation, eastern section

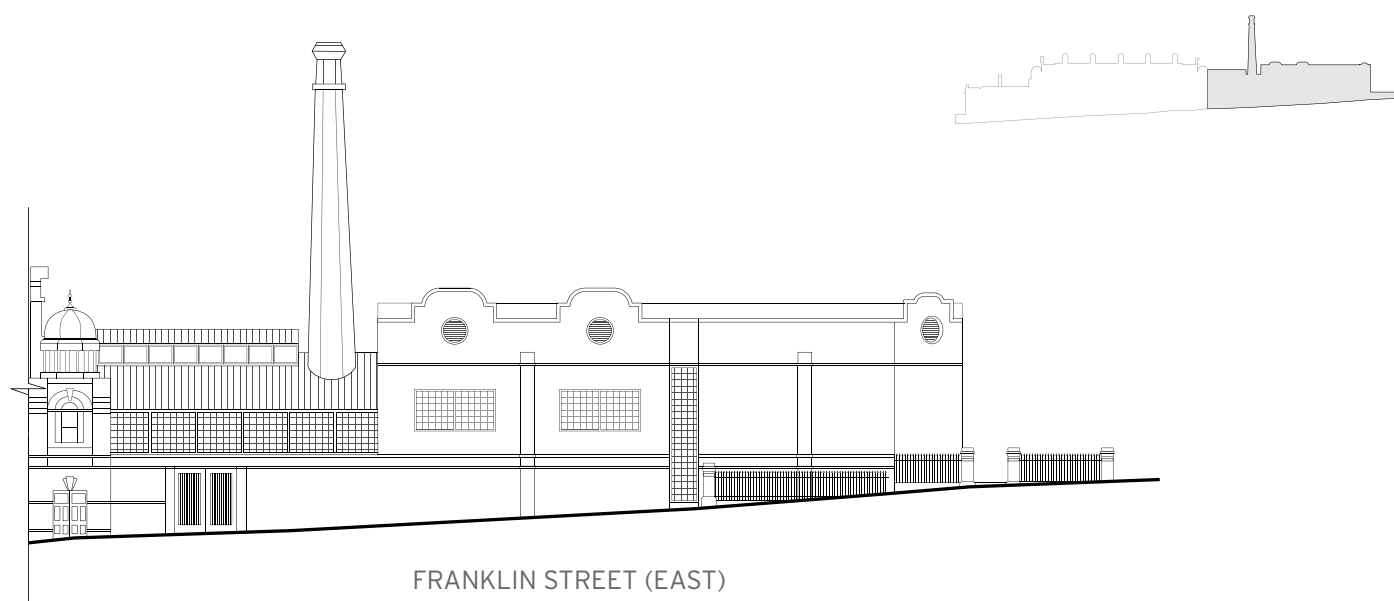




FIGURE 63 CITY BATHS VIEWED FROM FRANKLIN STREET, C. 1981: PRIOR TO THE DEMOLITION OF THE PLANT ROOM AND WATER TOWER

SOURCE CITY OF MELBOURNE ART AND HERITAGE COLLECTION

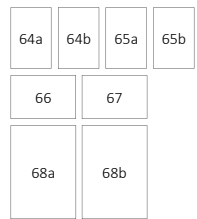


Figure 64 (a) Franklin Street façade: former residential (now café) entry; (b) former public exit



Figure 65 (a) Franklin Street façade; original windows to the pool survive in the western section of the façade; (b) the junction of original and 1980s fabric

Figure 66 Ventilators above the former men's pool viewed from the mezzanine roof deck

Figure 67 1981-3 fabric in the eastern sections of the Franklin Street façade

Figure 68 (a) Franklin Street façade: a small plant yard to Franklin Street dates from the 1981-3 additions; (b) a small landscaped area at the intersection of Franklin and Victoria streets was fenced as part of 1981-3 works

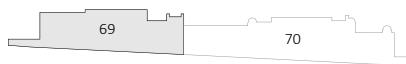


Figure 69 Victoria Street elevation, eastern section

Figure 70 Victoria Street elevation, western section



Page 57 figures (see next page)

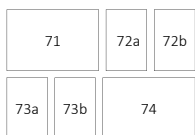


Figure 71 Additions of 1981-3 viewed from Cardigan Street to the north; the stepped parapets of the original water tower and its later addition are evident at right

Figure 72 (a) 1981-3 additions viewed from Victoria Street: altered sections of the original water tower; (b) modern multipaned windows and faux Edwardian Baroque detailing

Figure 73 (a) Original corner tower to the women's baths; (b) remnant tuckpointing to brickwork

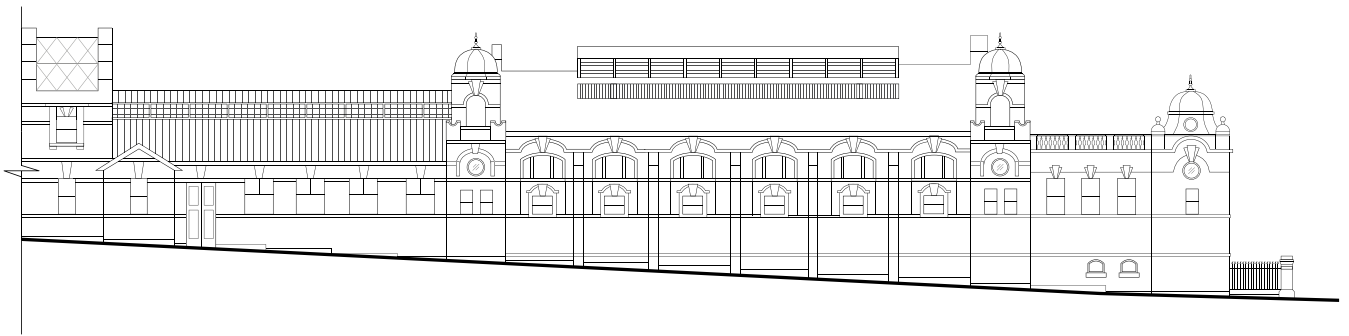
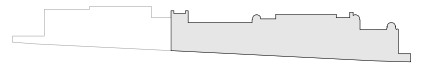
Figure 74 Windows to women's pool as viewed from Victoria Street

Victoria Street elevation

The Victoria Street elevation retains the street volumes of the former women's pool (currently used as a programme pool) and the former laundry (now change rooms) to its east. These tuck-pointed red brick volumes (Figure 73a, Figure 74) survive in a high state of intactness and integrity to their original states. The women's pool is expressed in a similar, albeit smaller, way to that of the men's pool to Franklin Street with ornate windows elevated above the street and towers incorporating belvederes and cupolas above situated at either end. The roof incorporates a simple ridge ventilator. To its east, the original laundry and wash-house volumes remains legible despite some alterations to their easternmost sections as part of the 1981-3 works (Figure 71). It is substantially lower in height than the pool enclosure and expressed in red brick with a steel-clad roof and a simple ridge ventilator.

As with the Franklin Street elevation the transition to 1981-3 fabric occurs in a graduated fashion. A water tower constructed at the rear of the wash-house in 1904 was retained during the 1981-3 works but was incorporated into a redeveloped two-storey volume which now provides a lift and internal staircases at the interface of the 1903-4 and 1981-3 building programmes. The lift overrun is visible to a limited extent from the street. The balance of the 1981-3 additions are separated from the building volume to the east by a small service yard.

The two-storey additions of 1981-3 are evident to the east (Figure 71, Figure 72a and Figure 72b). As with the Franklin Street elevation, the eastern sections of the site largely comprise squash courts at basement with gymnasia above. These are typically expressed as large expanses of red brick unadorned except for simple string course and parapet detailing and the broad reproduction of an oculus window detail found on the Swanston Street elevation. Modern multipaned windows to first floor studios reiterate those on the Franklin Street elevation.



VICTORIA STREET (WEST)



3.4.2 Interior

The interior of the building has been altered repeatedly over the last century. So much so that internal layouts and fabric survive in various states of intactness and integrity. It is not possible within the scope of the current survey to explain in detail the extent to which all original elements survive in every space. Much of the early fabric, particularly at basement level, is covered over. Consequently, the following provides a broad overview of the development of the various internal areas and the extent to which original fabric survives. Broadly speaking, it is possible to determine the evolution of a particular space by comparing the original 1903-4 drawings with those of the 1981-3 additions, as reproduced at Appendix B.

Basement

The basement was constructed in three broad programmes. When the building was constructed in 1903-4, the second-class slipper baths were located directly below their first-class counterparts at ground floor level. The facilities were completely independent with men's slipper baths in the southern sections of the Swanston Street wing and women's in its northern section. Each was accessed from the gender specific vestibule above by separate stairs. At basement level, the two bath-houses were separated by a rudimentary store located in the sub floor areas created by the slope of the site. This was a back-of-house area which may have played a role in servicing the pools. Contract drawings from c. 1960s indicate that public sections of the basement were expanded into these service and storage areas to create a new gymnasium area around this time. The basement 1960s gymnasium was further refurbished and expanded as part of the 1981-3 works. It currently forms part of a clinic located in the basement of the City Baths.

The original arrangement of spaces is no longer legible as a consequence of the expansion to the east and subdividing and partitioning of the various spaces. The broad volume of the women's slipper baths survives and is used as health studio. The men's second-class slipper baths-house is less legible having been partitioned as offices although its broad form survives. The former stairs to the women's baths have been removed at basement level. The former men's stairs survive in good and original condition.

As noted, additional excavation of basement areas was undertaken in 1981-3. This created an additional plant room beneath the vestibule/lounge areas and created access beneath the men's pool. This required some excavation below the men's pool and underpinning to existing masonry supports (Figure 75a)

The basement of the caretaker's residence is currently used as a café. Internal walls have been removed and the original arrangement of space is no longer legible.



Figure 75 (a) Underpinning works below former men's pool; (b) southern staircase between ground floor and basement

Ground Floor

For the purposes of the following assessment, the ground floor can be considered as six distinct areas.

- The northern wing to Swanston Street
- The southern wing to Swanston street incorporating the caretaker's cottage
- The circulation path through the building including the entry, vestibule, former laundry (change rooms)
- Women's pool to Victoria Street
- Men's pool to Franklin Street
- The additions of 1981-3 at the eastern end of the site

These are discussed individually below.

The northern wing

As constructed, the northern wing to Swanston Street at ground floor level, largely comprised the women's first-class slipper baths. This bath house and its fittings have survived with little alteration since their construction. They retain original baths in original compartments in a large bath-house retaining original timber roof trusses and lining boards (Figure 76). The area was designed to include a Jewish 'Mikvah' bath, a ritual bath designed for the purification of women.⁹⁴ The Mikvah bath enjoyed only intermittent use during the early twenty-first century. It was renovated in c. 2011 in consultation with the Melbourne Jewish community. The original bath space including its pressed metal ceiling, stained glass and timber enclosure survive although few interior finishes appear to have survived the refurbishment.

The area to the north of the bath house provided a dressing room for patrons of the baths and another accessed from the women's baths to the north. These areas were substantially altered with walls and partitions removed as part of the 1981-3 works to create fire egress from this section of the building via the basement. So much so, that the original layout and appearance of these rooms are no longer discernible.

The southern wing including the former caretaker's residence

Unlike its counterpart to the north, these areas have been subject to more extensive change. As constructed, the men's ground floor slipper baths were more or less identical to the women's. As with its northern counterpart, timber roof trusses and linings survive although partitions and other fittings have all been removed. The bath house was refurbished in 1960 with a new ceramic tiled floor introduced, although little change to the broad layout appears to have occurred. At that time, the bath house was extended into the ground floor sections of the caretaker's residence with new showers and an office created. However, more substantial works were undertaken in 1981-3 with the former bath-house gutted to create new locker rooms. The showers to the caretaker's residence were removed and saunas introduced at that time. A small triangular light court immediately to the east of the slipper baths was roofed and infilled as part of the 1981-3 works to create a space for the current ground floor plunge pool. Only the broad form of the former light court survives.



The circulation spine

The circulation spine includes the most altered sections of the building. It comprises a sequence of spaces including the modern day entrance, amalgamated men’s and women’s vestibules, a lounge area between the two pools; the change rooms and the adjacent waiting area and a corridor/lift lobby providing a connection to the additions of 1981-3. While the current arrangement has been achieved over a number of programs of construction, much of the fabric and finishes date from the 1980s works.

The original arrangement of segregated entries and separate vestibules was modified on a number of occasions through the last half of the twentieth century. The two vestibules were amalgamated to produce the existing open space in 1981-3 with few original walls remaining in place. Only the stair-wells and staircases to basement and first floor levels retain their original fabric and character. A cast iron column near the centre of the space is evident on the original drawings and also appears to have survived the various programmes of redevelopment.

As noted above, the triangular courtyard between the two pools was altered in 1955, 1966 and 1981-3 to produce the current lounge area (Figure 77) and the mezzanine above. All fabric in the lounge apart from the walls to the pools dates from the second half of the twentieth century. As noted below, the large windows to the pool areas date from 1955.

As constructed, the former laundry and washroom were situated within an attached, single-storey building at the eastern end of the women’s pool. It was independent of the boiler house to Franklin Street although a verandah provided covered access between the two. These buildings provided back-of-house facilities and were not part of the public experience of the baths. With the expansion of the public areas of the facility in 1981-3, the laundry areas were converted to provide more commodious changerooms and a small waiting area (Figure 78). Some demolition of the washroom, including the removal of a water tower above, was undertaken at that time.

76	77	78	79a	79b	80
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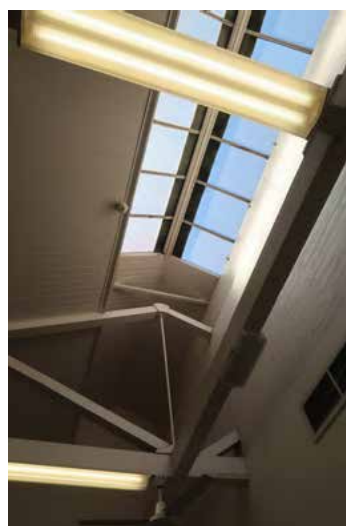
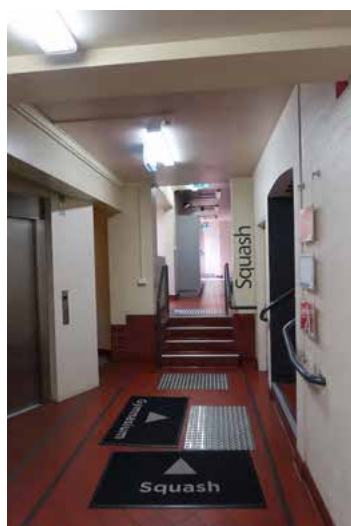
Figure 76 Former women’s slipper bathroom with original roof trusses, lining boards and roof ventilator evident

Figure 77 Lounge (in original central courtyard) viewed from mezzanine above; men’s pool is visible at rear

Figure 78 Rear circulation space with changing rooms (formerly) and honour boards at right

Figure 79 (a) Corridor between the former external walls of the laundry and the men’s pool; (b) original roof trusses have been curtailed in the former laundry (now men’s change rooms)

Figure 80 Stairs from ground floor level to basement; eastern wall of the original tower has been bagged and is visible at left



The existing lift was constructed in 2003 within retained sections of the water tower. The roof of the laundry was altered in 1981-3 to allow the construction of a larger deck area at mezzanine level (Figure 88, Figure 89a). Southern and eastern external walls to the washroom were incorporated into new circulation areas in 1981-3, becoming internal walls within the new development. Brick walls were bagged at that time. Nonetheless, the broad form of the laundry areas generally survives with most original walls and truncated sections of the original roof trusses in place. As noted above, the boiler house was demolished in its entirety in 1981-3 apart from its chimney. The boiler house and the adjacent covered way were completely rebuilt and retain no original fabric. New built form in these areas provides circulation areas to basement squash court and gymnasium above (Figure 79a and Figure 79b).

Women's pool

The women's pool enclosure is the dominant feature of the Victoria Street elevation of the complex. It comprises a straightforward red-brick volume with an oculus window to its eastern and western gable-ends. Lunettes line the upper walls to the north and south. At the eastern and western walls, blind lunettes form unglazed decorative features. The original design provided changing cubicles along the northern and southern walls of the pool enclosure. Smaller windows incorporating frosted glazing provided daylight to every third cubicle (Figure 81).

Despite its broad integrity to its original appearance, a number of very substantial changes to the pool have been undertaken. The men's and women's pools were constructed as cloistered spaces with solid walls to the streets and to the open central courtyard area between the two pools. Large new openings along the southern wall were created in 1955. Similar works to the former men's pool allows a visual connection between the two areas to be created. This required the removal of changing cubicles along the southern wall of the women's pool. More substantial rebuilding occurred in 1981-3.

According to original documentation, the surviving northern cubicles were removed, reinstated and re-erected at that time. Roofs to the pool buildings were altered with internal linings introduced. Louvres to the roof ventilator were closed off. The eastern sections of the south-facing roof pitch were altered in 1981-3 when a substantial section of the roof was removed to allow an increase in the size of the mezzanine roof deck (Figure 88, Figure 89a). The pool deck has also been reconstructed on a number of occasions; however the works of 1981-3 resulted in the removal of the pool deck and tiling in their entirety (Figure 82). Despite referencing depth in feet and inches, the extant tiling to the pool dates from these or later works.



Figure 81 Women's pool



Figure 82 Women's pool during works of 1981-3

Source City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection

Men's pool

The men's pool enclosure is a substantial element within the City Baths and a dominant feature of the Franklin Street elevation of the complex. As with the women's pool, it comprises a straightforward red-brick volume with oculus windows incorporating original stained glass to its eastern and western gable-ends. Arch-headed windows line the upper walls to the spectator areas. The pool enclosure is notable for its first-floor gallery allowing elevated vantagepoints from which to view competition events (Figure 83). This section of the men's pool is discussed with other spaces at first floor level below.

The original design provided changing cubicles along the northern and southern walls of the pool enclosure, all of which have been removed. Along the wall to Franklin Street, smaller windows incorporating frosted glazing provided daylight to every third cubicle. As noted above, new openings along the northern wall were created in 1955. Similar works to the former women's pool allows a visual connection between the two areas to be created. Glazing to the northern wall was replaced as part of the 1981-3 works but no other changes to the northern wall appear to have occurred at that time.

At 30m in length, the former men's pool is substantially larger than its female counterpart. It was constructed as a freestanding element founded in the soil at basement level. As with the City Baths more generally, the men's pool was refurbished in 1981-3 (Figure 84). Drawings describe the removal a modern epoxy screed to the pool deck suggesting that the deck had been refurbished on at least one previous occasion. Wall tiles were installed at that time. Images from 1983 suggest that few other changes were made at that time.

Figure 83 Former men's pool looking west





Figure 84 Men’s pool during 1981-3 refurbishment, looking east

Source City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection



Additions of 1981-3

As a consequence of the sloping site, the additions of 1981-3 were constructed over multiple levels with limited correlation with those of the earlier sections of the building. ‘Ground floor’ level of the additions is located almost 1.0m above that of the ground floor level elsewhere in the building with stairs at the junctions of the two programmes of development. At ground floor level, the additions chiefly provide an elevated viewing platform above squash courts on the level below (Figure 85). A boxing studio is located at the eastern end of the ground floor (Figure 86).

Figure 85 Squash courts from ground floor viewing area

Figure 86 Boxing Studio located in the easternmost sections of the ground floor



First Floor

For the purposes of the following assessment, the first floor can be considered as four distinct areas.

- The upper level of the central pavilion to Swanston Street
- Mezzanine and roof deck
- Viewing gallery above the men's pool
- The upper level of the additions of 1981-3 at the rear (east) of the site

Central pavilion to Swanston Street

The small upper level of the central pavilion to Swanston Street was constructed to provide vapour or Turkish Baths. As with the City Baths more generally, these provided separate facilities for men and women accessed by way of separate staircases from the vestibules below. The Turkish Baths were removed in 1923 when additional slipper baths were installed. This arrangement persisted into the mid-century. A number of walls were subsequently removed and the space was opened further as part of the 1981-3 works. Today the first floor level provides a large group fitness studio extending for the full depth of the central pavilion. Small offices to the northern and southern sides of the space survive and retain some early fabric. While original fabric to internal walls has substantially been removed, an original lantern constructed above the women's cooling room survives (Figure 87).

Mezzanine and roof deck

As originally constructed, a sunken triangular courtyard was located between the two swimming pools. The floor level of the courtyard was raised and a roof deck constructed above in 1955. This section of the building was entirely rebuilt in 1981-3 when a new ground floor slab was poured and a new enclosed mezzanine level and deck to its east were constructed (Figure 88, Figure 89a). These areas are bounded by the upper walls of the pools to their north and south. With the exception of the walls of the pools and laundry/wash-house, no original fabric is located in these areas. As noted above, the south-facing roof pitch of the laundry/wash-house was substantially removed to allow the construction of the roof deck.

Figure 87 Lantern to first floor group fitness studio



Figure 88 Roof to laundry (changerooms) during the 1981-3 works

Source City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection



Figure 89 (a) Roof deck looking west with gable-ended eastern wall of the former women's pool visible at rear; (b) remnant chimney at first floor level



Figure 90 Gymnasium at mezzanine level, roof of the women's pool is visible at right



Figure 91 (a) Tiered timber seating above pool;
(b) decorative frieze beneath modern roof lining



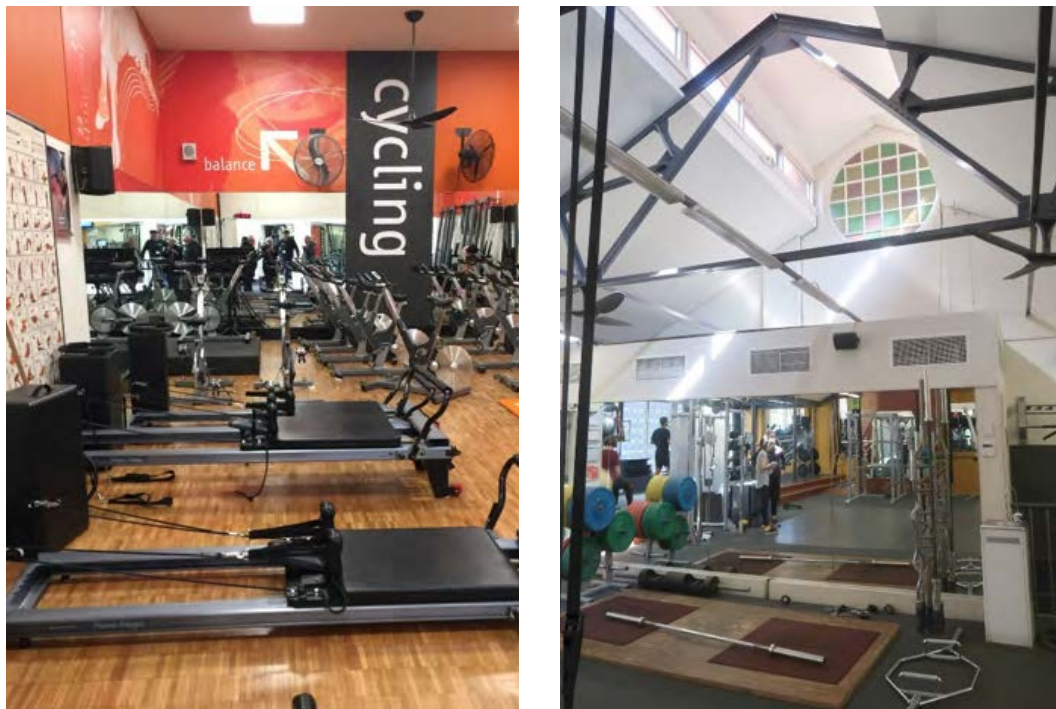


Figure 92 (a) Cycling Studio at first floor level; (b) Cardio Studio at first floor level abutting the eastern wall of the men's pool

Viewing gallery above the men's pool

The pool enclosure is notable for its first-floor spectator's seating (Figure 91a). Elevated timber benches from which to view competition events are located in two tiers in a gallery above the men's pool deck. This section of the pool is substantially intact to its original state with timber seating and railings to its four sides. Arch-headed windows line the upper walls to the spectator areas.

Original roof trusses survive at this level although the internal roof cladding of the pool enclosures dates from the 1981-3 works. Skylights were constructed and roof ventilators closed off as part of these works. An original frieze survives at cornice level (Figure 91b).

The additions of 1981-3

At first floor level, the additions of 1981-3 reflect the arrangements found on the floor below adopting split levels that follow the contours of the site. It comprises three studio spaces and stairs providing access from the floors below. No original fabric is located in these areas.

4.0 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

4.1 Introduction

The cultural heritage significance of the Melbourne City Baths is articulated in the VHR statement of significance (copy of full VHR citation is attached at Appendix C). However, the analysis undertaken in the preparation of this report, including the comparative analysis outlined below, examines (and comments on) the aspects and attributes of significance at a deeper level. This includes 'locating' the City Baths in a comparative context.

Some commentary is also provided at the end of this chapter on the VHR statement, incorporating recommended changes and additions to the statement.

4.2 Historical significance

Bathing and swimming in Melbourne in the mid-nineteenth century occurred at popular swimming spots on the Yarra River, and at the sea baths established along Port Phillip Bay. Sea baths were established at St Kilda in the 1850s, at Brighton in the 1860s and at Sandringham in the 1880s. Although the baths at St Kilda and Brighton still exist, albeit in modified forms, the Sandringham sea baths were demolished in 1919, as were the short-live Beaumaris Baths, which were opened in 1902 and destroyed by inclement weather in 1934.⁹⁵ The early trend in sea bathing was eventually overtaken by municipal baths in the developing suburbs, located further away from the Bay.

4.2.1 Indoor pools

The original Melbourne City Baths, on the site of the current baths, was constructed in 1860 and featured an indoor pool at a time when swimming and bathing was occurring outdoors. Although there were private pools around the city that operated for a short period, the 1860s baths are likely to have been the earliest example of a purpose-built indoor municipal pool in Melbourne. When the original structure was demolished and replaced by the current baths complex in 1904, indoor pools were still a unique feature.

Another early indoor pool was designed by Walter Burley and Marion Mahoney Griffin for Newman College, Melbourne University (1915-18, now demolished).⁹⁶ This facility was later closed and then replaced on campus by the Beaurepaire Pool. There were also a number of private indoor pools in Melbourne, including at Rippon Lea (from the early 1930s), and at Alfred Nicholas' house, Burnham Beeches, in Sherbrooke (also the 1930s).

Comment

The current City Baths occupies the site of the first 1860 City Baths, which are believed to be the earliest example of a purpose-built indoor municipal pool in Melbourne, and by extension, Victoria. As outlined below, the 1860 baths also pre-date the earliest similar indoor facility elsewhere in Australia. Even by 1904, when the current baths were constructed, a substantial public indoor facility of this nature was still a relatively rare outcome.

4.2.2 Early municipal facilities in Melbourne

Development of public swimming pools, and the maintenance of the naturally-fed swimming places, were generally recognised as municipal responsibilities from the early twentieth century. Many people continued to swim at points along the Yarra River, including around Yarra Bend in Kew/Clifton Hill, and at the city beaches. Malvern residents enjoyed 'clean, safe' places for public bathing at Gardiner's Creek, where Council had invested money and labour in domesticating that watercourse for public uses.⁹⁷

Many of the naturally-fed swimming holes developed or maintained by local councils had concrete or other forms of retaining walls, and even concrete floors in some cases. Some also had bathing boxes. Small areas of existing reservoirs sometimes had tiled edges, and concrete or masonry diving-points were not uncommon in large weirs that catered for aquatic recreation use. Many of these were established in rural Victoria, including at St Arnaud, Lake Nagambie and the Gippsland Lakes. On the Yarra River, development of the popular swimming and diving places, such as Deep Rock at Yarra Bend, was largely limited to paving and landscaping the environs.⁹⁸

The earliest municipal purpose-built baths in the suburbs and away from a natural water source, began as outdoor pools, with built facilities supporting the pool. There was an outdoor swimming pool located on the current site of the Carlton Baths from the 1890s, before the current baths opened in 1916. The Collingwood Baths opened in 1895 and the Richmond Baths opened in 1897 with an outdoor pool, built as part of the Queen Victoria Jubilee celebrations. The baths were upgraded in 1936 and converted to an indoor pool facility.

The Fitzroy Pool opened in 1908, with a men's pool that was at the time the largest in Victoria, measuring 175 ft by 80 ft (53.5m by 24.5m). It was gender segregated like the City Baths, and a smaller women's pool was provided. Although pool is not heritage listed, the Aqua Profonda sign, is on the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR 1687).

These baths were followed by outdoor pools at North Melbourne (1909), the Carlton Baths (1916) and the Brunswick Baths (1913). The interwar period saw many more municipal bathing facilities developed, including the Northcote Baths (1923), the original Malvern Baths (1927), Preston Swimming Pool (1928) and the Footscray Baths (1929).

The early purpose-built public pools replicated, by and large, the shape and design of existing Melbourne pools, such as the City Baths and Fitzroy Baths (1908). The European trend of curvilinear design, garden-setting and park-like adornment with statuary and rockeries did not come to Melbourne until the late 1920s (such as the old Malvern Baths). However, with few exceptions, public pool design in the metropolitan area continued to follow the rectangular, functional lane-divided type.



Figure 93 The opening of the Fitzroy Pool, 1908

Source Yarra Library Services

Public pools built during the years 1927-45 tended to place the pool facilities within a picturesque landscaped setting. These included the Footscray Baths (1929), Surrey Hills/Canterbury (1932), North Balwyn (1932) and Box Hill (1936). Swimming was also growing in popularity in this period.

With the Melbourne City Baths offering indoor swimming facilities, it wasn't until the 1930s that the inner Melbourne residents were provided with a large outdoor swimming pool, with the construction of the original Beaurepaire Pool on Batman Avenue in 1934-35. The pool was named in recognition of multi-Olympic medal winner and former Lord Mayor, Sir Frank Beaurepaire. The pool was open-air, and was designed and mostly used for lap swimming, training and competition purposes.

Comment

The 1904 City Baths is not the earliest of the municipal purpose-built baths in Melbourne, but it is the most intact of the early surviving group of public baths. It was preceded by an 1890s outdoor swimming pool on the site of the current Carlton Baths (not the current Carlton pool); the Collingwood Baths of 1895 (since closed); and the Richmond Baths of 1897. The latter, which survives, was originally an outdoor pool which was converted in 1936 to an indoor pool facility. Slightly later municipal pools included the Fitzroy (1908), North Melbourne (1909), Brunswick (1913) and Carlton (1916). These were followed by interwar developments in Northcote, Malvern, Preston and Footscray. Later developments also moved more towards pool complexes in garden or landscaped settings, although pool design continued to follow the rectangular, functional lane-divided type as established by the City Baths.

4.2.3 Early municipal facilities in Australia

As with the bathing and swimming developments in Melbourne, in the eastern states swimming pools began developing along the beaches, in part aided by weather more conducive to outdoor swimming. In Sydney, the early municipal pools were often located on, or in, Sydney Harbour, and were outdoor facilities. Indoor municipal pools not become a feature in New South Wales until the mid-twentieth century.

In 1937, this lack of indoor pools was highlighted by a visiting American swimming coach, who noted that indoor pools could help swimmers train during the winter months.⁹⁹ Similarly, in Queensland, municipal pools were built on rivers and in the ocean. Spring Hill Baths, Queensland, constructed in 1886, was Brisbane's first in-ground pool. The pool was housed in a two-storey brick swimming hall, with a wooden gallery with seating for competitions. It was added to the Queensland heritage register in 1992. The citation notes it was one of the first pools in Australia to allow mixed bathing and remains one of the oldest in use. The two-storey brick caretaker's residence at the rear of the site is still extant.¹⁰⁰

Comment

While the Melbourne City Baths is one of the earliest and most intact of the early surviving group of municipal purpose-built indoor baths in Melbourne, it is not the earliest in a national context. Rather, Spring Hill Baths in Queensland precede the City Baths by some 20 years, and are understood to be similarly intact.

4.2.4 Post-WWII Developments

In the post-war years, increasing priority was placed on the public bathing facilities accommodating school physical education classes, where 500 or so school swimmers could be present at competition days and special events.¹⁰¹ Most of the public pools that opened across Melbourne from the 1950s tended to conform to a functional architectural program concerned primarily with numbers of swimmers, and less with the beautification of the pool surrounds, as was the case in pre-WWII years.

The development of larger-scale, multi-purpose, aquatic facilities after WWII has been described as 'the expression of the...desire for a higher standard of living' across metropolitan Melbourne.¹⁰² The attainment for Melbourne of the 1956 Olympic Games, and the construction of the new Olympic Pool, was also a factor.

Across Melbourne, from Doncaster to Altona and Broadmeadows to Frankston, many new pools were built in the period 1945-75 (public municipal pools across Melbourne increased nearly four-fold in this period, to approximately thirty-five).¹⁰³ Also, by the 1960s, Melburnians were becoming sceptical about pollution levels in Port Phillip Bay.¹⁰⁴ To further bolster the supply of lanes for suburban swimmers, many of the pre-war public baths were also remodelled.¹⁰⁵ Some remodelled or rebuilt after 1956 included the Fitzroy pool; Richmond indoor baths; two City of Box Hill pools; and the Ashburton facility.¹⁰⁶

The Sir Frank Beaurepaire Swimming Centre at Melbourne University was constructed in the 1950s to cater for the increasing number of students training in aquatic sports. The opening of this new indoor centre helped to change the nature of swimming places in Melbourne and Victoria.



Figure 94 Interior, Spring Hill Baths

Source www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/facilities-recreation/sports-leisure/council-pools



Figure 95 Women's changing boxes, Spring Hill Baths

Source www.mustdobrisbane.com/blogs/brisbanes-oldest-swimming-baths

Across the metropolitan area, many grand-scale and multi-purpose centres were constructed, including the Harold Holt Memorial Swimming Centre which came at the beginning of a series of municipal swimming pool designs in Melbourne, completed in the 1970s and 1980s. These new developments accommodated not only leisure and performance swimmers in training, but also therapeutic, hydrotherapy, and other recreational facilities, many of them in heated indoor environs.¹⁰⁷

Comment

While the 1904 City Baths preceded by some decades the advances in municipal pool design and associated swimming and recreational programs of the post-WWII period, the baths nevertheless sought to adapt and change to ‘keep up’ with these advancements. As outlined in this report in Chapters 2 and 3, the City Baths in the second half of the twentieth century underwent several key phases of physical development and evolution, in support of maintaining its relevance and viability.

4.3 Architectural significance

4.3.1 Architects J J and E J Clark

Writing in *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Andrew Dods noted,¹⁰⁸

John James Clark (1838-1915) was a precocious exponent of the Renaissance Revival and a prolific public and private architect in a long career from the Victorian gold rushes of the early 1850s to WWI. He is best known for his design, at 19 years of age, of the Melbourne Treasury, arguably Australia’s finest Renaissance Revival building.

Clark moved to Melbourne with his family in 1852 and found work as a junior with the Victorian Colonial Architect’s office after presenting an intricate map he had drawn the year before of his hometown of Liverpool, United Kingdom. After designing both the Supreme Court and Customs House in Geelong (both 1855-6) and the Melbourne Government Printing Office (1856-8), he was commissioned to undertake the Treasury (1857-62). He became the department’s most respected officer, mastering many building types, especially courthouses, gaols, post offices and public offices. However, he was retrenched on ‘Black Wednesday’ in January 1878, along with 200 senior civil servants, due to the failure of an Appropriation Bill (known as the blocking of supply). He rejoined the Victorian PWD later that year for a period of 16 months, to oversee Smith & Johnson’s Supreme Court of Victoria.

Clark established himself in private practice in Melbourne from 1880 and then in Sydney from 1881, where he joined his engineer brother, George, in practice. As Clark Bros they gained places in seven competitions, including second place in the Qld Public Office competition. He was subsequently appointed Qld Colonial Architect in September 1883, but struggled to balance the workload with three large private commissions in Brisbane, including the Treasury Building (1886-1928), the (unexecuted) Town Hall (for which he won the competition in 1884) and the Masonic Temple (1885, demolished). Clark was dismissed in December 1885 after a public battle with his Minister. After a quiet decade of private practice and time travelling overseas, he followed the gold rush to Perth in 1896 to join the WA PWD, where he designed Perth’s Children’s Hospital (1898). His interest in health buildings had begun with a major role in designing Victorian asylums at Kew, Ararat and Beechworth (all begun 1864) and continued with the Lady Norman Wing at Brisbane’s

Children's Hospital (with Charles McLay, 1894-5), the Maitland Hospital, NSW (1903-5) and the Melbourne Hospital (1909-15), with his son, Edward James Clark (1868-1950), with whom he maintained a private practice after returning first to Brisbane in 1899 and then to Melbourne in 1902.

Clark probably deserves greater credit for his role in the design of Government House, Melbourne (1872-6). Although he worked under the direction of the PWD Inspector General W.W. Wardell, Clark's role may have been more significant. The scope of the Brisbane Treasury was due to Clark's obstinacy as he defied the competition conditions and created a grander scheme that would ultimately be realised over four decades.

Other notable works include the exceptionally fine Renaissance Revival Royal Mint (1870-1) and Edwardian Baroque City Baths (1901-4), both in Melbourne, and the Auckland Town Hall (1907-11). He was successful in private competitions, being placed 37 times in the 60 contests he entered. Clark was committed to the styles of the Renaissance, but largely avoided Mannerism in favour of harmonious synthesis. His only major Gothic Revival work, Ballarat's eclectic National Mutual building (1904-5), is classical in the Venetian tradition.

Consistent with changes in architectural thought more broadly, Clark's work in the 1890s moved from the Renaissance Revival expression that had defined his earlier work towards increasingly lively designs with greater emphasis on red brick and a debt to English Queen Anne and American Romanesque modes. Corner pavilions or towers often capped with shingle-clad cupolas became a feature of his work during this period (as is evident in the City Baths), sometimes imparting an understated eastern character to his work.

The Australian Dictionary of Biography notes that,

The use of red brick is important in most of his later works, especially those designed after his son joined him, though James is thought to have retained the design lead in the partnership. The mood was usually still Italianate ... The engineering approach to the use of brickwork which is to be found in the Maitland Hospital, the Melbourne City Baths and the Melbourne Hospital gives a less eclectic, more 'modern' result.¹⁰⁹

Comment

J J Clark was a prodigious architect and is presumed to be the principle designer of the Melbourne City Baths. The challenges present at the baths were handled with deftness consistent with a seasoned architect suggesting the J J rather than E J Clarke was the primary author of the design. The City Baths is the first in a trio of red brick buildings by Clark including the Maitland Hospital, NSW (1903-5) and the Melbourne Hospital (1909-15) which form a discrete and important phase in his work. Clark died in 1915 aged 77. As such, the design for the baths can be seen as introducing the closing chapter of Clark's long career.

Clark's design for the Treasury Building has been described as the best Renaissance Revival Building in Australia and Clark is primarily remembered as a Renaissance Revival Architect. However, he remained abreast of changing trends and continued to innovate and synthesise throughout his career. His move towards increasingly spirited designs with greater emphasis on red brick and a debt to English Queen Anne and American Romanesque modes represents an important final phase of his work during which designs for the City Baths and the final hospitals were created. These form an important group within Clark's vast oeuvre. With the loss of the Melbourne Hospital (substantially demolished in 1990) the City Baths are of particular importance to the city and the state.

4.3.2 Edwardian Baroque

The following is reproduced from The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture

The Edwardian Baroque is a grandiose style which, like its namesake the Baroque, employed classical elements in a bold manner, combined with elegant distortion (such as a curved cornice or exaggerated decorative motif), with particular trademark elements, such as expansive arches, rusticated columns, smooth hemispherical domes, prominent horizontal rustication, exaggerated voussoirs and keystones, cartouche, consoles and other decorative elements ...

It was used in Australia during the Federation period, appearing from c. 1898 – c. 1918 and was the style used for the pavilions and arches built to celebrate Australia's birth as a nation. Rather than celebrating a particularly Australian view, the Edwardian Baroque was a conscious alignment with the British Empire, as it was the favoured style in prominent public buildings across the Commonwealth, exemplified by the War Office Whitehall in London (1898 – 1906) by William Young. The Edwardian Baroque was usually used in large buildings intended for commercial or commemorative purposes, but its sense of grandeur was also employed in several prominent railway stations, such as Flinders Street Station, Melbourne by Fawcett & Ashworth (1901-10), the Fremantle Railway Station, WA (1907) and the Central Railway Station, Sydney (1904-8) by Walter Liberty Vernon. The style was sometimes rendered as a combination of red brick and cement or stone dressings, later derided as 'blood-and-bandages' by a younger generation of architects, as seen in J.J & E.J. Clark's City Baths, Melbourne (1903-4). The work of John Smith Murdoch on the Commonwealth Offices, Treasury Place, Melbourne (1910-12) is particularly fine and an exemplar for the evocation of Imperial grandeur and pompous importance the style exuded.¹¹⁰

Australians had been interested in evoking the columnisation and other perceived Baroque usage of Christopher Wren's St Paul's Cathedral from the 1860s onwards. This is evidenced in the seventeenth century French Renaissance mansards on Joseph Reed's Melbourne Town Hall (1867-80), the Melbourne GPO (1859-1903), Charles Tiffin's Brisbane Parliament (1859) and the Sydney Town Hall (1868). However, Baroque Revivalism's next Australian 'wave' was more English in its sources. The Queensland Public Works Department architect Thomas Pye utilized English forms in the abutments to Victoria Street Bridge in Brisbane, 1895. Pye also re-used English Baroque details in a skilled, asymmetrical composition of Ipswich Post Office, 1899-1901. His colleague at the Queensland Department of Public Works, and later Commonwealth Architect, J S Murdoch, re-used a Baroque vocabulary in his Stanthorpe Post Office of 1901-2 (Figure 99).

Pye, Murdoch, J J and E J Clark and others collaborated on the massive Queensland Land Offices of 1901-5, a reinforced concrete building that used a sculpted Baroque exterior to orchestrate deep bays and plastic surfacing as an adaptation to Queensland sun.¹¹¹ This flowed over into the first major competition for a commercial building constructed in this mode, the Melbourne AMP building, won by John Sulman and Joseph Power from two much stronger designs, also in Edwardian Baroque, by Robin Dods.¹¹² The Melbourne City Baths provided a further investigation of the role of Baroque and other ornament in public buildings. In the meantime J W Fawcett and H P C Ashworth's imposing baroque style Flinders Street Station (1901-11) (Figure 101) had commenced. Walter Vernon's similarly immense Central Station in Sydney was completed in 1903.

J S Murdoch's transfer to the Federal Department of Works saw an Australian climax to Edwardian Baroque in the Commonwealth offices, Treasury Place Melbourne, 1910-15. While less prodigious, the mode also informed the suburban post offices Murdoch was working on with Horace Mackennal (1909-14).¹¹³



Figure 96 Melbourne Hospital, c. 1912

Source State Library of Victoria, accession no: H2001.204/3



Figure 97 Treasury Buildings, John T Collins, photographer, 1963

Source State Library of Victoria, J.T. Collins Collection, La Trobe Picture Collection, accession no: H98.252/1366

4.3.3 Melbourne City Baths

Clark's design for the Melbourne City Baths emerged in this period of intense exploration of the Baroque and has been described as 'one of the most exciting and eccentric works of his career'.¹¹⁴ He and his son won the commission after he had been absent from Melbourne for some 20 years, being based in Sydney, Brisbane and Western Australia, before returning to the city where his career began. After winning the commission, he established an office in Swanston Street, to be close to the baths site.

The City Baths is considered the first of Clark's Edwardian Baroque buildings and was 'something of a prototype' for several subsequent designs in the latter part of his career - notably the Melbourne and Maitland hospitals.¹¹⁵ As noted, there is some doubt regarding the extent to which his son, Edward, was associated with the design, however, J. J. Clark has generally been attributed not least of all because it illustrates his 'wonderful engineering skill' as evidenced in both the planning of the building and the use of materials.¹¹⁶

Clark's design for the City Baths has been described as follows:

It appears to be inspired by the Edwardian Baroque and Romanesque Revival, but also has elements from Arabic and Roman bathhouses and the Arts and Crafts movement. The melding of these ideas is skilful, especially considering the building's relatively complex function and difficult triangular site. It has a whimsical character, but in keeping with Clarks' approach to synthesis, the design is kept in check with discipline and a respect for symmetry. At the same time it has a seaside feel with its front façade suggesting sea baths, not mundane facilities for hygiene and ablutions. It is both formal and joyful and calls out to be noticed.¹¹⁷

Some of the ideas at play in Clark's design for the baths, reflect a broader experimentation with the vocabulary of the Baroque during the Edwardian years in Australia and Clark was a key contributor to the evolution of the mode locally. Detailing to ground floor windows at the baths is ingenious, incorporating a continuous cornice interrupted by scrolls and large voussoirs extending upwards from the windows heads and pilasters below. At the end pavilions, the string course arches over oriel windows. Banded brickwork to the archways of the building's original segregated entries are re-imagined as striking Edwardian Baroque motifs. Likewise, detailing above doors and windows to Franklin Street suggests the Italian High Baroque; the latter having Mannerist qualities which are at odds with the rest of the building, but 'seem quite at home on this modest wall'.¹¹⁸

The baths predate the surge of Edwardian Baroque designs around the country through the later 1900s and beyond. The Provincial Hotel, Ballarat, built in 1909 to a design by Ballarat architect, Percy S Richards, has a composition described as 'very Baroque in its approach'.¹¹⁹ Spain, Cosh and Minett and Manson and Pickering undertook a number of prominent Sydney incursions in the same mode, including the Telegraph Building, 1912, Culwalla Chambers of 1913, and the Sydney Morning Herald Building of c. 1920-1. The City Baths also precede A E Michaels' work in Adelaide such as his Verco Building (1912); contemporary Edwardian Baroque buildings appearing in Perth around St George's Terrace (now virtually gone); and Brisbane's New Zealand House (1914). Notably, the baths form a foundation for the Clark's ongoing work in the mode at Melbourne and Maitland hospitals.

98	99
100	101
102	103



Figure 98 The War Office, Whitehall, London, 1899-1906

Source www.heathcaldwell.com/another_page/london_5

Figure 99 Stanthorpe Post Office, J S Murdoch, architect, constructed 1901-2

Source Kerry Raymond, via https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Stanthorpe_Post_Office,_north-west_corner_Maryland_and_Railway_Streets,_Stanthorpe,_2015.JPG



Figure 100 Melbourne City Baths, Algernon Darge, photographer, 1914

Source State Library of Victoria, accession no. H94.182/1)

Figure 101 Elevated view of Flinders Street Station looking east, Kerr Brother, photographers, 1916

Source State Library of Victoria accession no. H99.100/6



Figure 102 Commonwealth Offices, designed by J S Murdoch 1910

Source Victorian Heritage Database, National Trust of Australia (Victoria) citation

Figure 103 Provincial Hotel, Ballarat, Percy S Richards, architect, 1909

Source Victorian Heritage Database

Comment

The Edwardian Baroque was particularly-suited to large buildings intended for commercial or commemorative purposes, however its sense of grandeur provided an appropriate expression for prominent railway stations, such as Flinders Street Station, Melbourne by Fawcett & Ashworth (1901-10, Figure 101); J S Murdoch's Commonwealth offices, Treasury Place, Melbourne (1910-15, Figure 102); and the suburban post offices Murdoch was working on with Horace Mackennal (1909-14).¹²⁰ The City Baths provide a refined and early example of Edwardian Baroque enlivened by its imaginative detailing and its synthesis of eastern elements including its shingle cupolas and banded brickwork. The City Baths are considered to be one of the most distinctive Edwardian Baroque buildings in Melbourne and a sophisticated, early and refined example of the mode. They also predate the surge of Edwardian Baroque designs around the country through the later 1900s and beyond.

4.4 Social significance

The 'Understanding and assessing cultural significance' Practice Note to the *Burra Charter* 2013 provides the following definition of social value:

Social value refers to the associations that a place has for a particular community or cultural group and the social or cultural meanings that it holds for them.¹²¹

The social value of a heritage place has been described as, 'the special meanings attached to places by groups of people (rather than by individuals)'.¹²² A critical consideration in establishing the social significance of a place is its value to the present community. This sense of communal attachment is typically associated with places that are publicly accessible, or have otherwise been, 'appropriated into the daily lives of people'.¹²³ Places recognised as having social value include those that:

- Provide a spiritual or traditional connection between past and present
- Tie the past affectionately to the present
- Help give a disempowered group back its history
- Provide an essential reference point in a community's identity or sense of itself
- Loom large in the daily comings and goings of life
- Provide an essential community function that over time develops into a deeper attachment that is more than utility value
- Have shaped some aspect of community behaviour or attitudes
- Are distinctive – the old clock tower in a town or an architectural folly – features that lift a place above the crowd, making it likely that special meanings have been attached to that place
- Are accessible to the public and offer the possibility of repeated use to build up associations and value to the community of users
- Places where people gather and act as a community, for example places of public ritual, public meeting or congregation, and informal gathering places¹²⁴

While the Melbourne City Baths cannot be categorised under all of the above 'types' of places of social value, the italicised examples are of relevance.

Social significance or value is typically established through community consultation, sometimes in the form of survey questionnaires, interviews with members of the relevant communities or public discussion workshops. Opinion pieces in the local print media, and views expressed in talk-back radio shows can also be forums for the expression of community sentiment. Community consultation is rarely a 'scientific' process, although it is generally the case that the broader the cross-section of the community invited to express opinions, the greater the certainty about the outcomes.

Comment

No formal appraisal of social values was undertaken in preparing this CMP. However, it is considered likely that such a process has the potential to indicate that a community or group, including regular, long-term patrons and users of the baths, has a degree of social attachment to the City Baths. As a prominent building with a high level of public recognition in Melbourne, the broader community would also likely have a degree of attachment, without necessarily being patrons of the facility.

4.5 Statement of significance

4.5.1 Heritage Council of Victoria criteria

The following reproduces the Heritage Council of Victoria criteria. The italicised criteria (A, E and G) are considered to apply in this instance, with some qualification as to Criterion G (social significance), acknowledging that no formal appraisal or assessment of social value has been undertaken.

Criterion A: Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history.

Criterion B: Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history.

Criterion C: Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's cultural history.

Criterion D: Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects.

Criterion E: Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.

Criterion F: Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.

Criterion G: Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions.

Criterion H: Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Victoria's history.

The following reproduces the VHR statement of significance for the City Baths. Identified changes to the text, and additional text, are bolded; these derive from the analysis of significance undertaken here. It is again noted that the bolded text in relation to social significance depends on confirmation, via a formal assessment process. Chapter 6 includes a policy on social value, which addresses this (current) limitation of the report.

These changes and additions are recommended to be made to the statement as included in the VHR citation.

What is significant?

The City Baths were built by Swanson Brothers builders in 1903-4 to competition winning designs by the architect J J Clark and his son, E J Clark. Constructed on an unusual triangular site, the building provided the city with segregated bathing facilities for men and women.

Municipal baths were a common and necessary feature of daily life in early Melbourne when many houses had little provision for private bathing facilities. The present site was reserved for public baths in 1850 and a structure for bathing purposes was opened in 1860. **This was the earliest purpose-built indoor municipal pool in Melbourne, and nationally.** The current building was completed in 1904, **and at that time a substantial public indoor facility of this nature was still a relatively rare outcome.** It had two large swimming baths and associated changing facilities, as well as slipper baths, spray baths, Jewish Mikva baths and Turkish Baths. The symmetrical front facade clearly indicates the division of men's and women's facilities on either side of the entry bay.

The City Baths were very popular throughout the early twentieth century, however by the 1940s the facility had fallen into disrepair. Degradation continued after the Olympic Games in 1956 as the construction of suburban pools reduced patronage at the City Baths. Despite attempts to close and demolish the building in the 1970s, the City Baths were retained and underwent **substantial** restoration and alteration work from 1981-83, including the addition of spas, saunas, squash courts and a gymnasium. **Physical evidence of the original gender segregation was also largely removed during works in the 1950s and 1960s.**

Edwardian Baroque in style, the City Baths building is distinctive in its use of red brick and contrasting cement render mouldings. The **three-storey** central entrance bay incorporates arched openings emphasised by banded voussoirs, a broken pedimented entry and cupola-roofed belvederes. Flanking **two-storey** wings also incorporate cupolas at the corner bays.

The front entrance stairs and fence were **partly** reconstructed in the 1981-83 works, **after being modified in the 1960s.** Of similar configuration, the original stairs did not contain an entrance at street level. A fence of masonry and ironwork has replaced the original masonry fence along Swanston Street.

How is it significant?

The City Baths, Melbourne are of architectural, historical **and social** significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The City Baths, Melbourne are of architectural significance as one of the most distinctive Edwardian Baroque buildings in Melbourne and **a refined and early example of the mode enlivened by imaginative detailing and a synthesis of eastern elements including shingle cupolas and banded brickwork.** It is an important work of the noted Victorian architect, J J Clark. Working for the Public Works Department **early in his career**, Clark was a prolific designer of nineteenth century public buildings, and was responsible for such important buildings as the Treasury (1858, VHR H1526) and the Royal Mint (1869-72, VHR H0770).

The City Baths design came later in his career, and demonstrates that he remained abreast of changing trends, producing a sophisticated, early and refined example of the Edwardian Baroque.

The City Baths, Melbourne are of historical significance as a reminder of the important role played by bathing establishments in the early twentieth century. They are also illustrative of the patterns of social organisation in the early twentieth century, with the segregation of males and females still evident in the entry signage. The baths are also the most intact of the surviving early purpose-built municipal pools in Melbourne, and the earliest of the public indoor pools.

The City Baths, Melbourne are of social significance for long-term patrons and users of the baths. As a prominent building with a high level of public recognition, the broader community would also have an attachment to the facility.

