

**SITE NAME** Warehouse

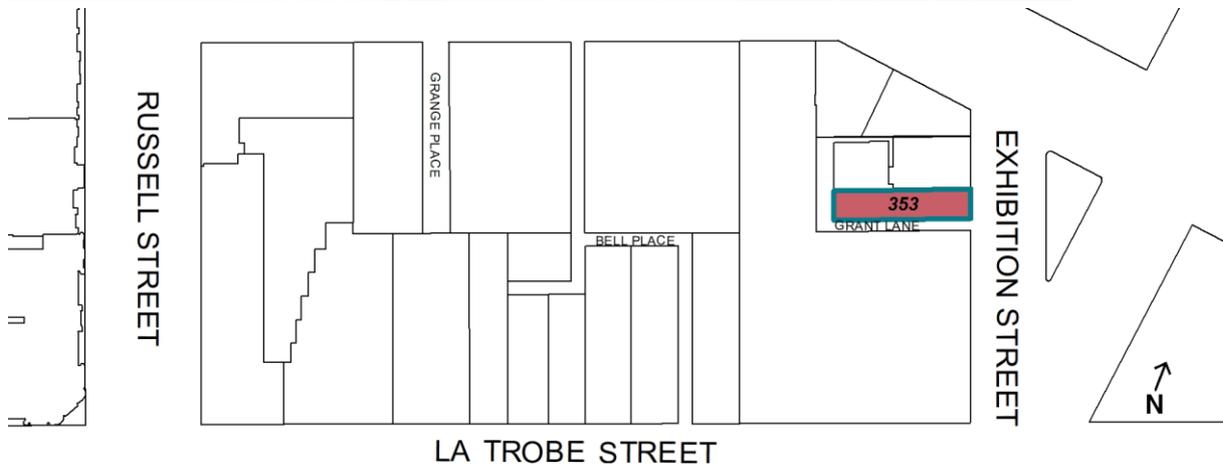
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**STREET ADDRESS** 353 Exhibition Street Melbourne

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**PROPERTY ID** 103616

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SURVEY DATE: October 2018

SURVEY BY: Context

**HERITAGE INVENTORY** H7822-2170

**EXISTING HERITAGE OVERLAY** No

**PLACE TYPE** Individual Heritage Place

**PROPOSED CATEGORY** Significant

**DESIGNER / ARCHITECT / ARTIST:** Arthur W Purnell

**FORMER GRADE** D  
**BUILDER:** Not known

**DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:** Interwar Period (c.1919-c.1940)

**DATE OF CREATION / MAJOR CONSTRUCTION:** 1926-27

**THEMES**

<b>ABORIGINAL THEMES</b>	<b>SUB-THEMES</b>
Research undertaken in preparing this citation did not indicate any associations with Aboriginal people or organisations.	Aboriginal Themes (Hoddle Grid Heritage Review, Stage 2 Volume 3 Aboriginal Heritage, March 2019) have therefore not been identified here.
<b>HISTORIC THEMES</b>	<b>DOMINANT SUB-THEMES</b>
6 Creating a functioning city	6.7 Transport
5 Building a commercial city	5.5 Building a manufacturing capacity

**LAND USE**

<b>HISTORIC LAND USE</b>	
<b>Archaeological block no:</b> 82	<b>Inventory no:</b> 2170
<b>Character of Occupation:</b> Residential	
Current building 1926. Fire 1976.	
1866 Cox	Building shown on site
1905/6 Mahlstedt	Two-storey building, set walls back from street frontage
<b>THEMATIC MAPPING AND LAND USE</b>	
1890s	Residential
1920s	Motors and service stations
1960s	Factories and workshops

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an Individual Heritage Place.

**Extent of overlay:** Refer to map

**SUMMARY**

353 Exhibition Street is a three-storey brick warehouse built in 1926-27 for use as a motor car showroom and sale room for Barlow Motors Pty Ltd, to a design by architect Albert W Purnell. Barlow Motors Pty Ltd had moved from the premises by 1928 and from 1930 most of the tenants were involved in garment manufacturing or the motor industry until it was converted into shops in 1982.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

### Creating a functioning city

#### *Transport*

Through the early twentieth century motor cars and buses and electric trams slowly replaced horse-drawn vehicles.

The first *Motor Regulation Act* came into force in 1910, and by June 1911 there were 2,722 motor cars and 2,122 motorcycles registered in Victoria, mostly concentrated in Melbourne. With increasing car ownership, the first motor garages selling petrol and offering repair services for vehicles were established throughout the city (Churchward 2008).

Initially considered a toy for the wealthy, the ownership of motor vehicles increased most markedly after World War One. Registrations of motor cars, trucks and cycles doubled in Melbourne between 1917 and 1922, reaching a total of 44,750 (Museum Victoria). As a consequence, the car showroom was constructed as a new type of place developed for the purpose of showing and selling cars.

During the economic depression of the 1930s, motor car ownership increased only half as fast as it had in the late 1920s, and during World War Two when petrol was rationed and new vehicles were unprocurable, it stagnated (Churchward 2008).

As Melbourne's population grew, there was greater competition for parking spaces. The first multi-storey car park was built in Russell Street in 1938 (Context 2012:44).

### Building a Commercial City

#### *Building a manufacturing capacity*

From the 1850s, the Yarra River and the docks west of Swanston Street were in essence the 'lifeline' of the city. Port facilities and large warehouses were built in this area to serve shipping interests (Context 2012:39-40).

By the 1880s, the areas of Flinders Street, King Street, Little Bourke Street and Spencer Street comprised multiple mercantile offices, produce stores and large-scale bonded stores, including Zander's Bonded Stores and Coles Bonded Stores. As Melbourne developed through the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, so did her manufacturing industry, much of which was established in close proximity to existing warehouses and stores.

Although affected by World War One in the period 1914-1918, by 1921, 38 per cent of Melbourne's workers were employed in industry with almost all new factory jobs in Australia between 1921 and 1947 created in Sydney and Melbourne. The growth of manufacturing, assisted by a new federal tariff in 1921, stimulated urban growth and by the end of the 1920s, Melbourne's population had reached one million people. The expansion of new sectors in the manufacturing industry was maintained by buoyant levels of domestic demand (Marsden 2000:29; Dingle 2008).

In the first decades of the twentieth century, the demand for residential development declined in central Melbourne as many residents moved out of the city to the suburbs, and the booming retail and manufacturing sectors rapidly took up available city properties (Marsden 2000:29-30). Multi-storey factory, workshop and warehouse buildings, some designed by architects, increasingly took over the city.

Development in the city slowed with the Great Depression that commenced in October 1929 and continued through the early 1930s. Because of a lack of finance over this period, instead of new construction, some city buildings were substantially re-modelled to create new office, commercial and industrial spaces, and also for use by government.

From the 1930s, like the rest of Australia, an increasing proportion of the city's workforce took up jobs in manufacturing, an industry that led Australia's recovery from the economic depression and a time when, the *Encyclopedia of Melbourne* notes, a

*steep rise in tariffs, devaluation of the Australian pound, falling wages and electricity costs all made local producers far more competitive internationally. Textiles benefited first, then the metals industries and engineering took over as pacemakers* (Dingle 2008).

After being the centre of manufacturing in Australia in the 1920s, Melbourne's importance in this regard began to decline. During the 1940s some city factories and warehouses were left empty or converted for other uses (Context 2012:35).

From the end of World War Two to the beginning of the 1970s, Melbourne underwent the most sustained growth in its history, mostly based on the manufacturing industry. At the peak of industrialisation in 1966, 37 per cent of total employment in Melbourne was dedicated to manufacturing, compared to the national average of 27 per cent (Maher cited in Tsutsumi and O'Connor 2006:8.3). Australia's manufacturing output increased 6 per cent per year between 1949 and 1967, and between 1947 and 1966, 155,221 new manufacturing jobs were created in Melbourne alone, roughly one-third of which went to women (Dingle 2008).

However, by the mid-1960s,

*[the] postwar expansion of manufacturing could no longer be contained within the old ring of inner industrial suburbs. They had become crowded and congested. New methods of production required more space and single-storey buildings to accommodate assembly-line techniques. The fork-lift truck led to new kinds of factory buildings. An increasing use of electricity for power and road transport rather than rail to move goods, opened up new locational possibilities...During the 1960s manufacturing expanded most rapidly in Moorabbin and the Oakleigh-Clayton area. When the available sites were taken up the area of fastest growth then transferred to Broadmeadows and Waverley* (Dingle 2008).

City centres retained some manufacturing until the late 1970s, mostly in the areas of clothing, printing and food processing, sectors that increasingly employed women workers. By the 1990s manufacturing had declined to 16 per cent of total employment in Melbourne, and 77 per cent of the workforce were working in the tertiary sector (Marsden 2000:99-100).

## **SITE HISTORY**

The subject site at 353 Exhibition Street, Melbourne, is part of Crown Allotment 10, Block 45 (CoMMaps) which, by 1866 incorporated a building, most likely a residence (Fels, Lavelle & Mider 1993, Inventory no 2170).

In c1890 a nine-roomed, two-storey stone house existed on the subject site (RB 1926; MMBW Detail Plan 1021, 1895; S&Mc 1890). Its first occupant appears to have been Jane Watts who ran a boarding house there in 1890 (S&Mc 1890). Other occupants included Sarah Bremner (also known as

Sal Reddan) who ran a brothel in the building, which was then known as 'The Poplars', from 1910 until 1920 (*Truth* 30 January 1915:3). From 1920 to 1926 the building was owned and occupied by Chinese residents 'Young Sing and others' (RB 1926). The building was demolished in 1926.

In 1927, the subject building was recorded as a 'factory being built' in the Sands & McDougall directory; it had a net annual value of £120 upon its completion that year (S&Mc 1927; RB 1927). Architect Arthur W Purnell designed the brick, three-storey building, constructed in 1926-27, as a motor car showroom and sale room for Barlow Motors Pty Ltd (see Figure 1). At this stage, Alexander Barlow's business, Barlow Motors, was located at 20-28 Latrobe Street (*Age* 17 April 1926:4; RB 1927). The new building at 353 Exhibition Street was constructed to back onto the east side of 20-28 Latrobe Street, and was located next to Lanes Motors, Buick car distributors (*Herald* 20 July 1925:12). Purnell had a close client relationship with Barlow and designed other buildings for him, including several car showrooms, horse stables and a house (University of Melbourne Archives).

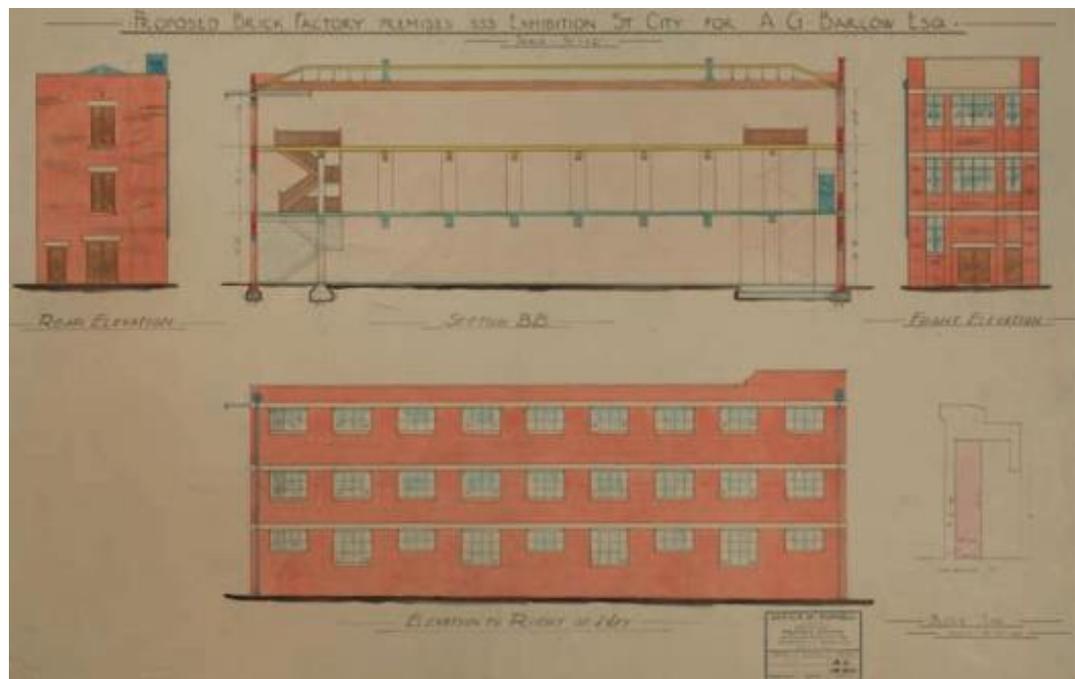


Figure 1. Architect Arthur W Purnell's design for Barlow Motors Pty Ltd's building at 353 Exhibition Street. (Source: Groves 2009:33)

Alexander George Barlow founded and was managing director of the car dealership company Barlow Motors Pty Ltd. He was also a racing horse owner and was well known in the motor and racing industries (*Weekly Times* 22 May 1937:16). Barlow made his debut in the motoring business after relocating, with his wife, from Ballarat to Melbourne in 1915, at which time he was aged 35 (*Smith's Weekly* 29 October 1949:27). Within a few years of his arrival Barlow controlled a chain of motor trading establishments throughout Victoria, mostly selling luxury class cars. Alexander Barlow died in 1937 after multiple investigations into allegations regarding his financial affairs (*Age* 6 July 1938:15).

Barlow Motors Pty Ltd did not remain at the subject site for long. In 1928, 353 Exhibition Street was vacant, and in 1930 title was conveyed to John Robert Cooke who let the building out to commercial tenants (S&Mc 1928; RB 1930). Most of the tenants of the building were involved in either motor or the clothing manufacturing industries, including George A Bond (later registered as Bonds Industries),

manufacturer of socks and underwear, who used it as a storeroom from 1929 until at least 1933 (S&Mc 1929 and 1933). Luxor Fabrics (later registered as Luxor Underwear Manufacturing Co) occupied the building for some years until 1946. By 1946, under the ownership of Cooke Robertson, the three floors of the building were let to Grant Bearing Services, motor engineers; W H Amad, white work manufacturer; and D Groszlick, frock manufacturer (S&Mc 1945; RB 1940; *Argus* 14 February 1946:18). Owner and occupant of the building in the 1950s, Wadee H Amad, died in 1955, but ownership and occupancy of the building remained with W H Amad, manchester makers and wholesalers, until at least 1976 (*Canberra Times* 30 March 1976:7). In addition, Grant Bearing Services remained as an occupant of the building until at least 1974 (S&Mc 1974). Alexander Grant, proprietor of Grant Bearing Services, was vice-president of the Camberwell group of the Honorary Justices' Association and a member of the Institute of Automotive and Aeronautical Engineering; he was elected Melbourne City councillor for the Gipps ward in 1954 (*Age* 2 July 1954:16).

The subject building in the 1940s can be seen in Figure 2. Minor alterations and additions were made to the building in the late 1940s, presumably internally, as they were not detailed in the building permit records (MBAI 24418).

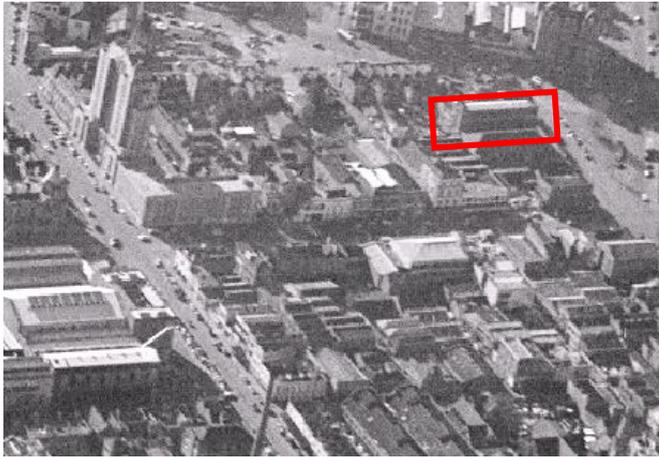


Figure 2. Extract from a aerial photograph showing the subject site, outlined in red, c1940s. (Source: Hodgson c1940s, SLV).

In 1976 a fire caused significant damage to the building's interior. The fire, estimated to have caused \$1 million in damage, was believed to have started in an electrical switchboard in a passage on the ground floor. A newspaper article on the fire reported that it had 'destroyed the three-storey brick building', presumably referencing the interior, and taken the life of a sixteen-year-old girl and left another in a critical condition (*Canberra Times* 30 March 1976:7).

Reinstatement works were carried out to the interior of the building following the fire in 1976 at a cost of \$30,000 (MBAI 46919). In 1978, the building was advertised for sale as 'an excellent brick freehold' with immediate vacant possession, with an area of 769 square metres (8,280 square feet) being adaptable to offices, showrooms, club or institutional purposes (*Age* 14 June 1978:23). In 1982 the building was converted to shops (MBAI 54853).

The building presently houses Bueno, a built environment business, and an apartment on the second storey.

*Arthur W Purnell, architect*

The University of Melbourne Archives is the custodian of Arthur W Purnell's architectural drawings, and provides the following information about Purnell's practice:

*Arthur W. Purnell (1878-1964) was a Geelong-born architect who built a thriving practice in Melbourne. Arthur Purnell had a long and successful career...until he retired in the late 1950s. Over this time he designed hundreds of buildings, ranging from garages to grandstands. (Groves 2012)*

*Purnell initially set up on his own [practice] in...Swanston Street...[and later]...moved to larger premises in Phair's Buildings at 327 Collins Street. In 1915 he went into partnership with Isadore George Beaver, a Manchester-born architect 19 years his senior...In 1925 the partnership with George Beaver ended and the following year Purnell moved to the Equitable Building at 314 Collins Street. In 1928 he went into partnership with Eric Hazel Round and William Alfred Graham.*

*Purnell also had a long-standing and a close client-architect relationship with Alexander George ('Alec') Barlow (1880–1937), a trailblazing, somewhat shady Melbourne car dealer. Redesigned car show rooms, racing stables and a house were amongst the work completed by Purnell for Barlow. (University of Melbourne Archives 2016)*

**SITE DESCRIPTION**

Located on the northern periphery of the Hoddle Grid between Victoria and La Trobe streets, 353 Exhibition Street is a narrow-fronted, three-storey motor showroom building constructed in 1927 in loadbearing face brick. The building sits on a deep allotment abutting Grant Lane on the southern and western elevations, sited between Latrobe and Mackenzie streets.

The principal façade fronting Exhibition Street is constructed in face brickwork laid in English bond. It terminates in a simple, partially rendered horizontal parapet which returns but steps down on the Grant Lane frontage. The façade is symmetrical, comprising a wide central bay with a narrower bay each side, separated by plain brick pilasters, and wider brick corner elements. At the first-floor level, a signage box has been fixed to the central bay of brickwork below the window. The brickwork to the pilasters, corners and reveals has curved corners. The height of the ground floor is substantially greater than that of the first and second storeys, as is characteristic of industrial buildings from this period.

The original doors and windows on all three levels of the Exhibition Street façade and at the eastern end of the Grant Lane frontage at ground level have been replaced with contemporary aluminium framed windows, and a widened shopfront and entry opening created on Exhibition Street. Some of the openings at street level to Grant Lane at its eastern end have also been widened. A canvas awning extends above the ground floor but stops short of the northern and southern ends of the façade.

The remainder of the windows are multi-pane original steel framed windows. Consistent with other twentieth-century industrial buildings in inner city Melbourne, some of the windows feature a

permanent ventilation system where one row of sashes is angled back and the gap above covered in mesh.

Above the ground, first and second storey windows are continuous painted render lintels that extend along all three elevations of the building. A former wide doorway at ground level on the rear elevation has been infilled with brickwork.

### INTEGRITY

353 Exhibition Street is generally intact with some changes visible to the original or early elements of the building. The building retains its original scale; walls and pilasters of loadbearing face brick, continuous painted render lintels and parapet detailing. It largely retains its original fenestration, pattern of openings and some steel frame windows. Alterations include the replacement of original windows and doors on its principal façade facing Exhibition Street and insertion of new openings at the ground level.

### COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The construction of warehouses and industrial buildings was an important phase of development in central Melbourne, especially during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The buildings were usually low scale and located in minor streets and laneways with rear lane access to facilitate the movement of material in and out of the building. Today, most of these early factory or warehouse buildings are no longer operating as such and have often been adapted to house professional offices or other commercial functions.

The brick warehouses constructed around the early twentieth century and early interwar period are generally of a simple utilitarian character, utilising loadbearing face brick external walls with either a steel post and beam or reinforced concrete internal structure. Windows are generally large, designed to maximise access to natural light at a time when artificial lighting was not adequate for the manufacturing process.

The following examples are comparable with 353 Exhibition Street, being of a similar style, scale, construction date and use. The images and descriptions are provided by CoMMMaps unless stated otherwise, with images dated c2000 or later.

#### *562-566 Little Bourke Street, c1920s (HO701)*

The former Sun Electric Building. A four-storey brick former warehouse with a basement. Built in the early 1920's. Refurbished into an office in 1987. Converted and subdivided into residential units with ground level retail in 2000.



Figure 3. 562-566 Little Bourke Street, constructed in c1920s.

*337-339 La Trobe Street, 1923-24 (HO1208)*

A three-storey face brick warehouse building with classical derived detailing including bricked pilasters and a dentil cornice. It was built for stationers John Dickson & Co. Contrasting lintels topped with squared corbels make features of these wide factory windows.



Figure 4. 337-339 La Trobe Street, constructed in 1923-24.

*39-41 Little Collins Street, 1919 (Interim HO1277 – Recommended as significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review).*

Three storey brick former factory. Built 1919. Converted to offices and retail in 1966. The ground floor was refurbished and converted to a restaurant in 2001.



Figure 5. 39-41 Little Collins Street, constructed in 1919.

*27-29 Little Lonsdale Street, 1924 (Recommended as significant in the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review)*

A two-storey warehouse with contrasting cement rendered lintels and expressed corbels over the ground floor. Windows replaced but in the original scale and form of the building.



Figure 6. 27-29 Little Lonsdale Street, constructed in 1924.

353 Exhibition Street retains substantial evidence of its development in the interwar period as a motor showroom and factory warehouse building, in its form and scale, and utilitarian and functional yet refined design. There are several surviving examples of this building type within central Melbourne (albeit often adapted to house new uses such as professional offices). The building is a now rare example in the area around the north-eastern periphery of the Hoddle Grid, where its broader streetscape context has been considerably changed by later twentieth century redevelopment.

It is comparable with a number of other HO listed examples of the type, including 337-339 La Trobe Street (HO1258), 39-41 Little Collins Street (HO1277) and 562-566 Little Bourke Street (HO701), being of a similar character, scale and degree of intactness. It is also comparable with 563-567 Little Lonsdale Street and 27-29 Little Lonsdale Street, both of which are proposed for listing on the HO as part of the Hoddle Grid Heritage Review.

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**ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA**


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**CRITERION A**

Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history (historical significance).

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**CRITERION B**

Possession of uncommon rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history (rarity).

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**CRITERION C**

Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history (research potential).

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**CRITERION D**

Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).

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**CRITERION E**

Importance of exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).

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**CRITERION F**

Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance)

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**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 (social significance).

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**CRITERION H**

Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history (associative significance).

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**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme as an Individual Heritage Place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Melbourne Planning Scheme:

**MELBOURNE PLANNING SCHEME**

EXTERNAL PAINT CONTROLS	No
INTERNAL ALTERATION CONTROLS	No
TREE CONTROLS	No
OUTBUILDINGS OR FENCES (Which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-3)	No
TO BE INCLUDED ON THE VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER	No
PROHIBITED USES MAY BE PERMITTED	No
ABORIGINAL HERITAGE PLACE	No

**OTHER**

N/A

## REFERENCES

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*Weekly Times*, as cited.

## PREVIOUS STUDIES

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<b>Central Activities District Conservation Study 1985</b>	D
<b>Central City Heritage Study 1993</b>	C
<b>Review of Heritage overlay listings in the CBD 2002</b>	Ungraded
<b>Central City Heritage Review 2011</b>	Ungraded

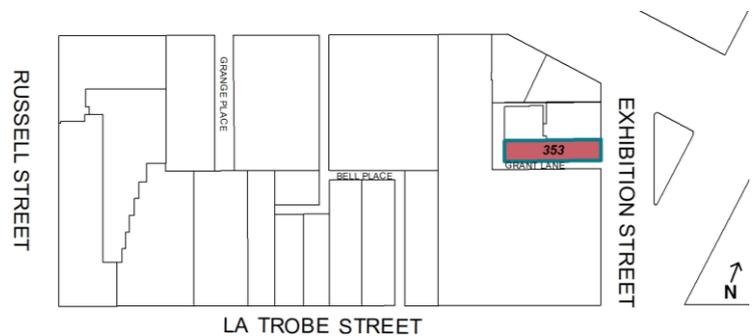
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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

**Heritage Place:** Warehouse



**PS ref no:** HOXXXX



### What is significant?

353 Exhibition Street, Melbourne, a three-storey face brick warehouse built to a design by Arthur W Purnell in 1926-27.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- Original building form and scale;
- Original face brick walls and pattern of fenestration including parapet, pilasters, continuous painted render lintels and pattern of window openings; and
- Original steel frame windows along Grant Lane.

Later alterations such as the replacement of original windows and doors on its Exhibition Street elevation and insertion of new openings at the ground level are not significant.

### How it is significant?

353 Exhibition Street, Melbourne, is of local historic and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

### Why it is significant?

The former motor car showroom and sale room building at 353 Exhibition Street, constructed in 1926-27 to a design by architect Arthur W Purnell, is historically significant for the evidence it provides of the rise of manufacturing in the city in the 1920s which led the recovery from the economic depression of the late 1920s-early 1930s. From the end of World War Two to the beginning of the 1970s, Melbourne underwent the most sustained growth in its history, mostly based on the manufacturing industry. The building at 353 Exhibition Street exhibits this growth, housing tenants involved in the motor and clothing

manufacturing industries from c1930 until the mid-1970s, until it was converted to shops in 1982. Built initially for Barlow Motors Pty Ltd as a motor car showroom and sale room, the building also provides evidence of the early years of motoring in Victoria. With the doubling of registrations of motor cars, trucks and cycles in Melbourne between 1917 and 1922, the car showroom was a new type of place developed for the purpose of showing and selling cars. Although Barlow's occupancy was brief, the building was used in association with the motor industry into the 1970s. (Criterion A)

353 Exhibition Street is significant for the substantial evidence it retains of its development in the interwar period for use as a motor showroom and factory warehouse building. It is one of several such buildings that survive from the period, which are generally low scale and use simple construction of loadbearing face brick walls with either a steel post and beam or reinforced concrete internal structure. The building is now a rare example in the area around the north-eastern periphery of the Hoddle Grid, where its broader streetscape context has been considerably changed by later twentieth century redevelopment. While modest and utilitarian, like other buildings of its type, 353 Exhibition Street demonstrates a refined yet highly functional aesthetic and exhibits other key characteristics of its type including a symmetrical facade with simple parapet and a regular pattern of large, efficient steel framed windows with painted render lintels. The lack of superfluous decoration reinforces this simple and disciplined industrial aesthetic. (Criterion D)

#### **Primary source**

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Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020)