

Statement of recommendation from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria, to the Heritage Council of Victoria

Summary of cultural heritage significance (section 40(4)(a))

The Executive Director recommends that the John Curtin Hotel be included in the VHR as a Registered Place.

Statement of significance

What is significant?

The John Curtin Hotel, at 27-31 Lygon Street, Carlton, designed by Billing, Peck and Kempster in 1915.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include:

- The original external form, materials and detailing of the building
- The building's high level of external integrity to its original design
- Internally, the general arrangement of main bar/dining room/kitchen and ancillary spaces
- The panelled timber bar with inset mirrors to the pelmet
- The decorative stained-glass windows, installed in the ground-floor lightwell, depicting views to the Working Mens' College (now RMIT University) and the main entry portico of the Victorian Trades Hall
- The original and ongoing use of the place as a public house.

How is it significant?

The John Curtin Hotel is of historical and social significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

Criterion A

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

Criterion G

Strong or special association with a particular present-day community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.

Why is it significant?

The John Curtin Hotel is historically significant for its association with the trade union and labour movement in Victoria. Built in 1915 to replace an earlier hotel constructed in 1859-60, it has been closely associated with Victoria's trade unions since its establishment, due in large part to its proximity to the Victorian Trades Hall. Unionists, left-wing activists and members of the Labor Party have used the current establishment for over 100 years to conduct informal gatherings, meetings, hold celebrations and presentations, and accommodate interstate officials on visits to Victoria. Trade unions have played a fundamental role in shaping the working lives of Victorian (and Australian) society and the John Curtin Hotel has provided one of the principal venues for unionists to gather and disseminate ideas. It has provided an obligatory dropping in spot for Labor Party politicians on the rise, including Gough Whitlam, Bill Landeryou, and Bill Hayden and it has a close association with Robert (Bob) James Lee Hawke, a key figure in the Victorian and Australian labour movement in the twentieth century (and later



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Australia's 23rd Prime Minister), who used the John Curtin Hotel as his 'home away from home' during his time as President of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU). The John Curtin Hotel has been an important venue for working-class politics and activism in Victoria for over 100 years [Criterion A].

The John Curtin Hotel is socially significant for the strong attachment Victoria's trade unions and the labour movement have with the place. The attachment is particularly strong given the place's proximity to the Victorian Trades Hall, union offices and other left-aligned organisations. The John Curtin Hotel has acted as an informal meeting place for those involved in working-class politics and activism in Victoria since its establishment and it continues in this capacity to the present day. The John Curtin Hotel remains as a 'centre of left politics', a place where people from progressive politics gather. It is seen as an integral part of a labour "precinct" in the heart of Melbourne, which encapsulates Trades Hall and the Eight Hour Monument. The John Curtin Hotel has, and continues to be, a meeting place for the trade union and labour movement community beyond the immediate locality with those involved in trade unionism and the labour movement travelling to the hotel to attend meetings, training or political demonstrations from across the State. The outcomes of these political activities have had ramifications for workers and other affected groups from across the State by bringing about legislative changes through political actions. The ongoing use of the John Curtin Hotel by the trade union and labour community for meetings, networking, celebrations and commemorations resonates into the broader Victorian community [Criterion G].