

## OFFICES (Former MLC Building)

181-189 Victoria Square



(CD Ref 3971/83)

The MLC building was Adelaide's first post-war skyscraper and a 'benchmark' building embodying advances in construction technique (such as curtain walling) which have since altered the face of the central business district. The building has become a landmark in Victoria Square.

The parent company of the Mutual Life and Citizens' Assurance Society Limited (MLC) was Citizens' Life Assurance Company Limited incorporated in 1886 in Sydney. The company soon ' . . . placed upon a permanent basis the system of industrial assurance in Australia'. Branches were soon afterwards opened in the other colonies, and in South Australia in 1898.

In 1907 the company amalgamated with Australia's second oldest mutual life assurance society, The Mutual Life Association of Australia, and became the Mutual Life and Citizens' Assurance Company Limited. In 1910 the MLC took over the Australian Widows' Fund, which had started in Melbourne in 1871. That

company constructed its first purpose built offices in Adelaide at 131 King William Street. This 1901 building still survives and is known today as Electra House. MLC then occupied various premises, including Electra House again (1930-41), and the Savings Bank building in King William Street.

Simultaneously, head office in Sydney purchased land in 1949 for new offices in Brisbane, Perth, Hobart, Adelaide, Townsville and Hamilton in New Zealand. The Adelaide site was formerly occupied by the Windsor Castle Hotel and Morialta Chambers.

The Adelaide company offices were built in the 1950s, similar in style to those also being built in other states. The pamphlet distributed by MLC in Adelaide in 1957 to commemorate the new offices stated that the ' . . . edifice has introduced a new era in architectural and engineering design for large city buildings . . . '

The design was the outcome of overseas research on the design of steel frame structure which was aimed at decreasing the weight and quantity of materials formerly used and of speeding

## Heritage of the City of Adelaide

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construction, while retaining stability and strength. Material and time saved meant considerable saving in costs and in the loss of interest upon capital outlaid.

The architects Bates, Smart and McCutcheon of Melbourne, assisted in Adelaide by Lawson, Cheesman, Doley and Partners, applied the principles of this research to the construction of the MLC building which was adapted for Australian materials and conditions. MLC lauded their achievement and claimed that ' . . . the beauty of our structure of pale green, purple and silver, holds and delights the eye from all quarters, and in sunlight or under grey skies it is undoubtedly the outstanding building of Adelaide'.



(CD Ref 3971/10)

Certainly the building brought revolutionary constructional methods to Adelaide, involving the refinement of steel framed buildings and a 'curtain wall' which is a feature of the building. The integrity of the building is extremely high.

The building contractors were Fricker Brothers who started work in October 1955, continued through 1956, and finished in 1957.

Gray A.C., 'Union is strength - a centennial history of the Mutual Life and Citizens' Assurance Company Limited, 1886-1986' (second draft), 1986 MLC (Adelaide), (pamph.), 1957; *MLC News*, Vol. 1, June-December 1957; The Mutual Life and Citizens' Assurance Company Limited, *The story of the MLC*, 1936; Solier, C.W., 'A hundred years of Australian life assurance' in *The Royal Australian Historical Society Journal and Proceedings*, 1938.

The text in this Information Sheet was copied from the **Heritage of the City of Adelaide: An Illustrated Guide**, (1996). The photographs contained in this Information Sheet are a selection of those held by Heritage Services, in digital format.

The property described in this Information Sheet is included in the Register of State Heritage places. A heritage listing does not mean or imply right of access by the public to such properties.

*The heritage related Principles of Development Control as well as the Precinct specific objectives and Principles of Development Control are contained in the Adelaide (City) Development Plan. These should be referred to in whole when contemplating any development.*

*Further information on the Heritage Incentives Scheme, an initiative of Council to sponsor timely and appropriate conservation action is available upon request of the Customer Service Centre.*

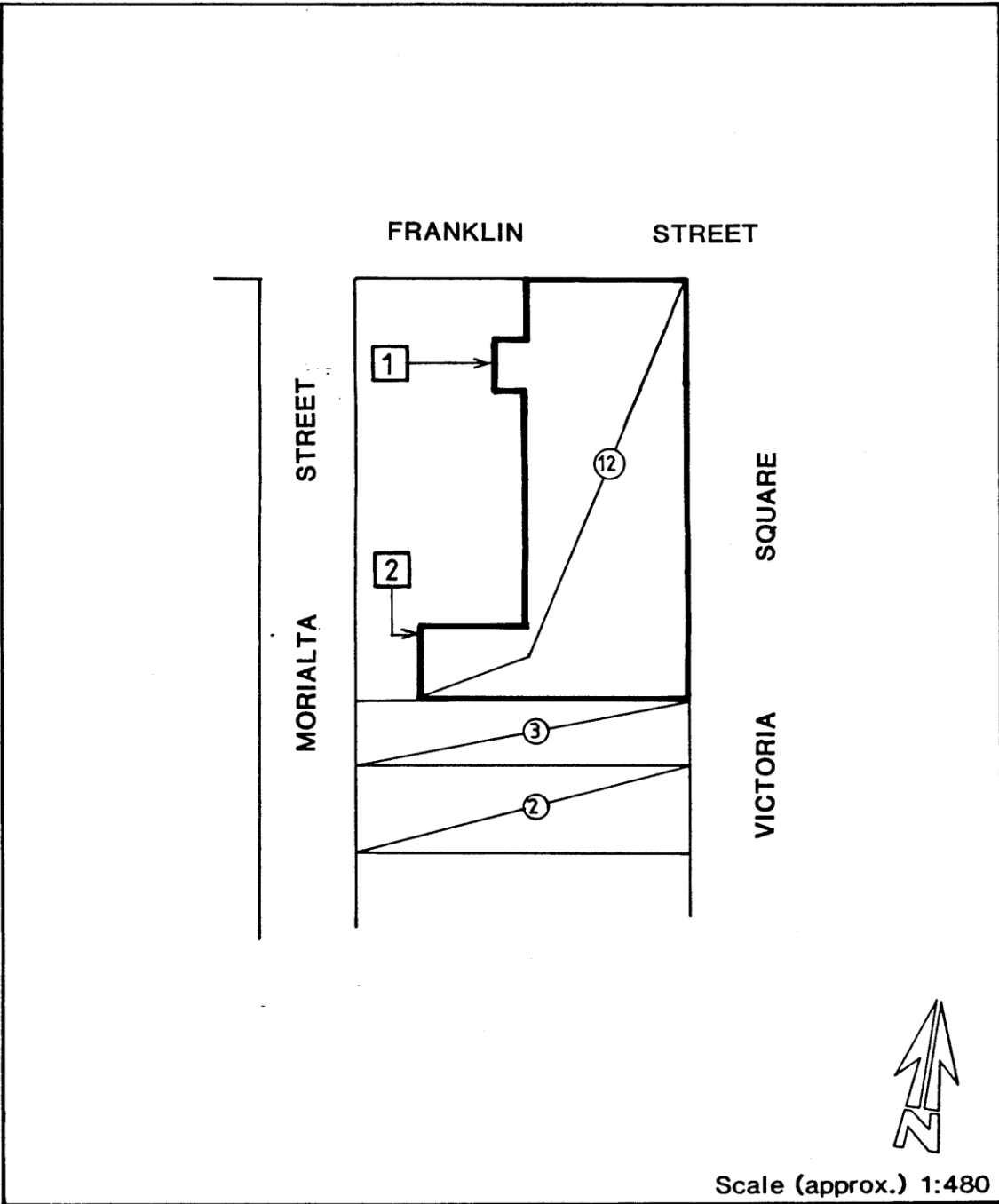


# CITY OF ADELAIDE HERITAGE STUDY

## The City Heritage Register-Definition of Items

Prepared by the Dept. of Planning and Development

Item	M.L.C. BUILDING	Building No	10/0601
Address	181-189 Victoria Square	CTs	4278/2-16 incl.



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Item M.L.C. BUILDING

Building N<sup>o</sup>

10/0601

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### NOTES:

1. Fire escape stairs.
2. Service core.