

IN THE HERITAGE COUNCIL OF VICTORIA

**IN THE REGISTRATION HEARING – FORMER ORIENTAL HOTEL, 57 NELSON PLACE
WILLIAMSTOWN**

14/000936

WITNESS STATEMENT OF ALLAN BRYCE RAWORTH

I, Allan Bryce Raworth, heritage consultant of 19 Victoria Street, St Kilda, Victoria, make the following statement in the abovementioned proceedings:

1. I am a heritage consultant who conducts business under the name of Bryce Raworth, Conservation Consultant, Architectural Historian.
2. I have the qualifications and experience set out in a document attached to this witness statement (Attachment 1). In summary I have provided expert witness evidence on similar matters before the VCAT, the Heritage Council, Planning Panels Victoria and the Building Appeals Board on numerous occasions in the past, and have been retained in such matters variously by municipal councils, developers and objectors to planning proposals.
3. I have been assisted in the preparation of this statement by Martin Turnor of my office. I have also been assisted in the formatting and presentation of this witness statement by Nick Sutton of Planning and Property Partners Pty Ltd. I adopt the content of this statement as my evidence before the Heritage Council. The views expressed in this witness statement are my own.
4. This witness statement has been prepared in response to written instructions provided to me by Planning and Property Partners Pty Ltd which are attached (Attachment 2)
5. In general terms I am instructed to:
 - Review the material supplied to me in relation to the Heritage Council Registration Hearing concerning former Oriental Hotel;
 - Review the expert evidence I previously prepared in respect of the former Oriental in VCAT proceeding P625/2013;
 - Consider whether the views I expressed as to the level of significance which could be attributed to the former Oriental Hotel in my earlier statements of

evidence, or the basis upon which those views were formed, require modification in any respect, and if so what respect?

- Consider whether the content of the proposed nomination, any of the work supporting the nomination and/or any of the statements of grounds filed objecting to the Executive Directors determination alter either the basis upon which I expressed my views as to the level of significance which could be attributed to the former Oriental Hotel, or my conclusions as to its level of significance;
- Consider whether I agree or not with the Executive Director's determination and the reasons given for that determination;
- Have regard for the criteria for inclusion of buildings on the Register under the Heritage Act 1995 in reconsidering my earlier evidence and the other matters which I am asked to consider in these instructions; and
- Prepare a witness statement which sets out the conclusions I have reached and clearly states the basis or assumption which I have made which form part of the reasoning by which I reach my conclusions. My witness statement should enclose my earlier evidence concerning the former Oriental Hotel.

Previous Involvement

6. I have previous experience with the former Oriental Hotel. In 2003, I provided expert evidence (on behalf of a previous owner) in relation to the hotel to the Panel hearing concerning Amendment C34 to the Hobsons Bay Planning Scheme. I have also provided the current owner with heritage advice, reports and an expert witness statement to VCAT in 2013 in respect of an application for a permit to demolish the former Oriental Hotel and redevelop the site (VCAT Reference Numbers: P74/2013, P398/2013 P625/2013, P611/2013, P73/2013, P401/2013). My previous statements of evidence in relation to the former Oriental Hotel are provided as Attachment 3 of this statement.

Opinions

7. As noted above, in 2003 I provided expert evidence in relation to the hotel to the Panel hearing concerning Amendment C34 to the Hobsons Bay Planning Scheme on behalf of a previous owner. My opinion on the significance of the hotel at that time can be summarised as follows:

... the former Oriental Hotel is in poor condition, has been substantially altered in appearance, is of little architectural distinction and makes only a limited contribution to its context which is, in any case, no longer intact. Its structural and superficial deterioration has further reduced its integrity and significance. While it is accepted that the building has some contributory status, primarily on the basis of its historical associations as a larger, three storey hotel within the Nelson Place precinct, it is clear that the overall integrity, condition and significance of the place is of a low order relative to that exhibited by other nearby hotels.

8. It is noted that Amendment C34 relied on a citation from Council which gave a c1871 construction date for the hotel. Further historical information has more recently come to light pointing to an earlier construction date of c1854. This information was known to me in 2013 when I prepared an expert witness statement for VCAT in relation to an application to demolish the hotel and redevelop the land. My opinions on the site as put to the Tribunal can be summarized as follows:

- The c1854 construction date gives the hotel some added historical significance but it does not fundamentally change my opinion with respect to the significance of the hotel.
- Regardless of whether the hotel was built c1854 or c1871, it remains a building of low intactness and integrity and limited architectural interest.
- If the hotel were to be retained and made safe for occupation, it seems likely that a substantial amount of existing fabric would need to be replaced.
- The combination of its low intrinsic interest, its poor integrity and structural condition, and the low integrity of the surrounding streetscape mean that demolition of the hotel can be seen to be acceptable subject to an appropriate replacement building.

9. I gave evidence to the Tribunal that was consistent with my written statement of evidence. I was then of the view, based upon all I knew of the history of the building at that time, that the former hotel enjoyed no greater than significance at a local level. In forming that view I was mindful of the hierarchy of significance which exists in Victoria. Had I considered that the building warranted, or might have warranted, recognition at a State level, I would have been obliged to inform VCAT of that view.

10. Since giving evidence to VCAT in relation to the Former Oriental Hotel in 2013 I have, as part of responding to the instructions given to me in this case, considered:

- a. The application to nominate the Former Oriental Hotel for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register;
- b. The recommendation of the Executive Director to the Heritage Council;
- c. All submissions to the recommendation of the Executive Director; and
- d. The Victorian Heritage Register Criteria and Threshold Guidelines.

11. I note that nothing in any of the material which I have considered in response to my instructions in this matter in any way causes me to alter my opinion in relation to the level of significance of the building.

12. Having reviewed all the material, I agree with the analysis and conclusions expressed by the Executive Director that the former Oriental Hotel at 57 Nelson Place, Williamstown is not significant at a State level and should not be included in the Victorian Heritage Register. I also agree with the reasons proffered by the Executive Director.

13. Having reviewed all the material, my views on the significance of the former Oriental Hotel remain unaltered.

14. In my opinion, the former Oriental Hotel has been substantially altered in appearance, is of little architectural distinction and makes only a limited contribution to its context which is, in any case, no longer intact. Its structural and superficial deterioration has further reduced its integrity and significance. While I accept that the building has some historical interest, it is clear that the overall integrity, condition and significance of the place is of a low order relative to that exhibited by other nearby and/or early hotels.

Declaration

1. I declare that I have made all the inquiries that I believe are desirable and appropriate and that no matters of significance which I regard as relevant have to my knowledge been withheld from the Heritage Council of Victoria.

Dated: 6 July 2014

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. B. Raworth', with a horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Signed:

ALLAN BRYCE RAWORTH