

**67 DARLING STREET, SOUTH YARRA**

**Submission on the Heritage Issues Associated  
with the Proposed Demolition and Replacement of the Existing Building**

prepared for

**Control Property Pty Ltd**

May 2005

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# 67 DARLING STREET, SOUTH YARRA: SUBMISSION ON THE HERITAGE ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROPOSED DEMOLITION AND REPLACEMENT OF THE EXISTING BUILDING

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## 1.0 Introduction

This submission has been prepared for Control Property Pty Ltd, the owners of the property at 67 Darling Street, South Yarra. The report includes comments on the heritage issues and impacts associated with proposed demolition of the existing residential building on the property, and the construction of a new multi-unit development.

The report also includes a description of the subject property, and an assessment of the proposed works in the context of the relevant City of Stonnington heritage controls and guidelines.

Architectural drawings prepared by F2 Architecture, numbered 3.0 to 3.8, and dated 20 April 2005, were referred to for this report.

For the purposes of this report, the subject property is considered to face east, with the property at 69 Darling Street located to the north, and 65 Darling Street located to the south. This is consistent with the architectural drawings referred to here.

### *Related Reports & References*

Reference is made to *Heritage Appraisal: 67 Darling Street, South Yarra*, Allom Lovell & Associates (for Control Property Pty Ltd, March 2005), which is attached to this submission. This appraisal of the subject property includes a history of the property and the immediate precinct within which it is located, and conclusions with regard to heritage significance. Particular attention is paid to architect and builder Howard Lawson, who briefly owned the subject property in the early 1920s, and is understood to have been the building designer. Lawson's involvement in the property occurred during the early years of his association with development in the Alexandra Avenue area of South Yarra, an area that is sometimes referred to as the 'Lawson precinct'. The precinct is generally understood to include Alexandra Avenue between Punt Road and the railway bridge, and the northern sections of both Darling and Caroline Streets. These are the streets that were generally developed between the 1920s and 1940s, and which have the greatest concentration of higher density flat blocks.

Reference is also made to a report prepared by David Bick, *Assessment of the Heritage Overlay Area (HO122) Value of 67 Darling Street in South Yarra*, June 2004. This report includes a brief history of the subject property, together with a description of the building, a summary of changes and alterations to the building over time, and an assessment and overview of significance. The report is not attached to this submission.

## 2.0 Heritage Listings

The subject property is not included in the Victorian Heritage Register, Register of the National Trust of Australia (Victoria), nor the Register of the National Estate.

### *City of Stonnington*

The subject property is located within the Heritage Overlay precinct known as the 'Alexandra Avenue / Domain Road / Punt Road Precinct' (HO122, see Figure 1). No tree controls or external paint controls apply as a result of inclusion in the Overlay. The precinct is described below in Section 4.0.

The following heritage studies and reviews have examined the Heritage Overlay precinct within which the subject property is located, and provided descriptions and assessments of the precinct:

*Prahran Conservation Study* (Nigel Lewis, 1983).

*Prahran Character and Conservation Study* (Prahran City Council, 1992).

The subject property was given a B grading, in a Level 1 streetscape, in the *Prahran Character and Conservation Study*. B grade buildings are defined as follows:

*B buildings make an architectural and historic contribution that is important within the local area. This includes well preserved examples of particular styles of construction, as well as some individually significant buildings that have been altered or defaced.*

*Buildings in this category will usually be fine and/or typical examples of their type, era or style, and may help demonstrate the development of their immediate area in one or several periods. They will usually retain a substantial degree of their original material or appearance, and any such additions as are visible will usually either be sympathetic to the character of the original, or will demonstrate a typical and/or notable type of building alteration from another era. They will usually be good and/or substantially intact examples of fairly standard architectural types and styles from particular eras...*

*Some B grade buildings gain part of their significance from their location within an architecturally or historically rich context, especially if that context is an Urban Conservation Area...A building's significance (both architectural and historical) as a contributory element within this context may therefore be sufficient to warrant a B grading, even though a similar building in a less important context may have been graded C.<sup>1</sup>*

Level 1 streetscapes are defined as follows:

*Level 1 streetscapes have a statewide significance, and define an important collection of buildings, generally from a similar period or representing a similar style.<sup>2</sup>*

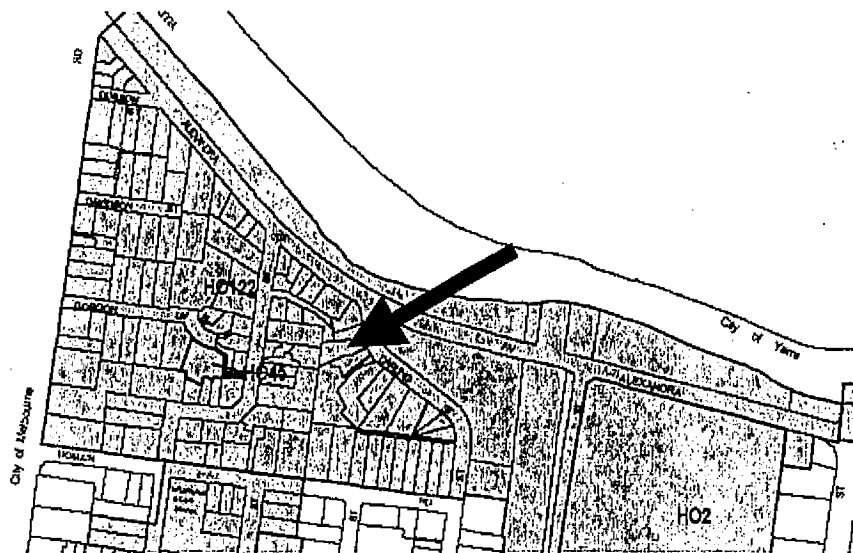


Figure 1 Stonnington Heritage Overlay map, with subject site indicated.

### 3.0 Brief History

As noted above, a more detailed overview of the history of the subject property is provided in *Heritage Appraisal: 67 Darling Street, South Yarra* (Allom Lovell & Associates, March 2005).

The subject site at 67 Darling Street, along with the adjoining 65 Darling Street (San Toy), formed Allotment 2 of Section A in the Parish of Prahran. This allotment was originally purchased from the Crown in 1918 by J L Kiddle,<sup>3</sup> who was for a time Howard Lawson's solicitor.<sup>4</sup> H R Lawson Pty Ltd (Howard Lawson's company) acquired the land at 67 Darling Street in August 1922.

The property was then transferred to Alice Lawson (Howard Lawson's wife) in November 1923. Isobel Biffen, the wife of Howard Lawson's partner, became the proprietor (and resident) in April 1924, and retained ownership through to her death in 1946, after which ownership transferred to (presumably her heirs) Betty and Jack Biffen.<sup>5</sup> The Prahran rate books refer to 6-roomed brick structures (houses not maisonettes) being located on each of the sites (65 and 67 Darling Street) in about 1922.<sup>6</sup> Both buildings are assumed to have been designed by Howard Lawson, given his association with the properties.

By the early 1930s the subject building at 67 Darling Street had been converted into two, four-room brick flats, valued at £80 each. As the table below indicates, several other local Lawson-associated houses of the 1920s were later converted to flats. The report prepared by David Bick,<sup>7</sup> provides an overview of changes to the subject building which in addition to the original conversion to two flats, includes the internal 'gutting' of the lower floors, removal of the original internal and external stairs, addition of new external stairs, and a 1990s reworking to accommodate separate flats on all three levels, with the current ground floor flat apparently created out of the original sub-floor level. The latter works also incorporated the addition of a new verandah and substantial alterations to the ground level facade.

#### *Bungalow Style*

The property at 67 Darling Street is in the Bungalow style, with references to the Craftsman style of bungalow which drew on the east coast American domestic vernacular architecture, rather than the California Bungalow style. Craftsman bungalows are generally distinguished from California bungalows through their more simple overall form, rectangular plans, the use of attic storeys, dormer windows set in steeply pitched gable roofs, and a long verandah under the fall of the eaves. California bungalows, in Australia, tended to be single storey and more derivative of eastern or Oriental influences (Japanese, Indian).<sup>8</sup>

Lawson was also known for designing, and building, what he referred to as 'Manhattan' bungalows (no. 67 Darling Street is not one of these). Between 1917 and 1919, Lawson designed a number of two-storey houses in this style, which had links to the Shingle-style mansions of east coast America, as well as Californian and English vernacular influences. The buildings, which included Lawson's own residence, Broxton, at 342 Dandenong Road, East St Kilda (built in 1918), had multi-gabled intersecting roofs, roughcast and clinker brick external walls, enclosed verandahs, curved brackets, timber lattice infills, tapered chimneys, etc.<sup>9</sup>

#### *Other Local Lawson Developments of the Early 1920s*

The construction of the building at 67 Darling Street in c.1922 occurred at a time when Howard Lawson and his associates (business partner Reginald Biffen, wife Alice Lawson, and mother Ada Emily or Emily Ada Lawson) were involved in the acquisition, development and sale of a number of properties in the Darling Street and Alexandra Avenue area, with Howard Lawson assumed to be the architect. The table below is a summary of the local Lawson-related 1920s works.<sup>10</sup>

The Chateau, 49 Darling Street, constructed in c.1923-4. It is first recorded as a 7-roomed house which was converted into flats in c.1936. The allotment was purchased in 1921 by Alice Lawson and was owned by her at the time of building construction. Howard Lawson briefly resided here in 1923.<sup>11</sup> This is a C grade building in a Level 3 streetscape.<sup>12</sup>



Avignon, 51 Darling Street, constructed in c.1922, when it was built as two, 4-roomed flats. The site was purchased in 1921 by Alice Lawson; Dina Crosbie was the owner in 1922. During the early 1920s Reginald Biffen was one of the residents. In terms of grading, this property is not listed in the *Prahran Character and Conservation Study, Building Grading Data Base*.<sup>13</sup>



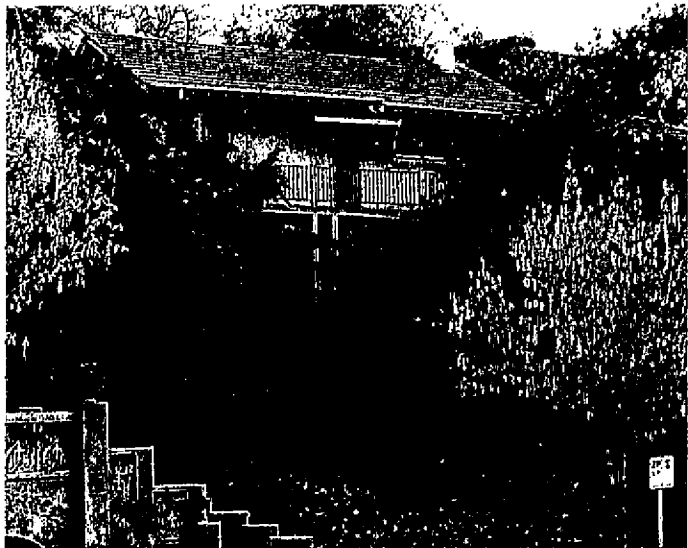
53 Darling Street was constructed in c.1921 as a 6-roomed house, and then converted to flats in c.1924. The site was purchased in 1921 by Alice Lawson. Within a year Timothy McInerney was the owner of the property. This is a C grade building in a Level 2 streetscape.<sup>14</sup>



Santoy, 65 Darling Street, constructed in c.1922, and first recorded as a 6-roomed house which was converted to flats in 1926. The property was owned by Lawson's mother, Ada Emily Lawson in the early 1920s, and then by Alice Lawson from the mid-1920s. This was Howard Lawson's residence for many years.<sup>15</sup> This is an **A2 grade** building in a **Level 1 streetscape**.<sup>16</sup>

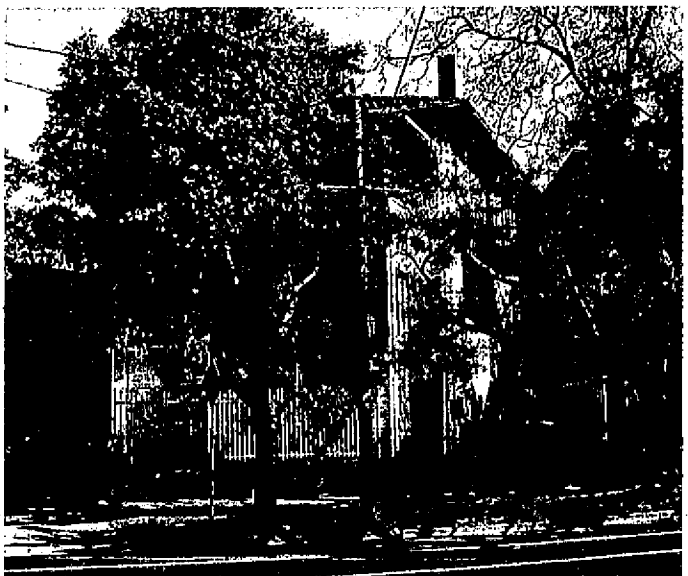


67 Darling Street (subject property) built c.1922 as a 6-roomed house and converted to flats by the early 1930s. Howard Lawson's company briefly owned the land in 1922, before it was transferred to Alice Lawson in 1923, and then to Isobel Biffen in 1924. This was the home of Isobel and Reginald Biffen for many years. This is a **B grade** building in a **Level 1 streetscape**.<sup>17</sup>



K I Flats, 51 Alexandra Avenue, built as two flats in the mid-1920s. This is a **B grade** building in a **Level 3 streetscape**.<sup>18</sup>

Howard Lawson's involvement or association with this property has not been confirmed, however the building is attributed to him on stylistic grounds.



Lanark, 49 Alexandra Avenue, built as flats in c.1923. This is an A2 grade building in a Level 3 streetscape.<sup>19</sup>

Howard Lawson is identified as the 'agent' on the MMBW property service plan, and is therefore assumed to be the architect.



524 Punt Road, constructed c.1923 as two flat dwellings. Biffen is believed to have purchased this land in 1922, and it was sold in 1924 with the flats already recorded on the property.<sup>20</sup> This is an ungraded building in a Level 2 streetscape.<sup>21</sup>



522 Punt Road, constructed c.1923 as two flat dwellings. Biffen is believed to have purchased this land in 1922, and it was sold in 1924 with the flats already recorded on the property. This is a B grade building in a Level 2 streetscape.<sup>22</sup>

