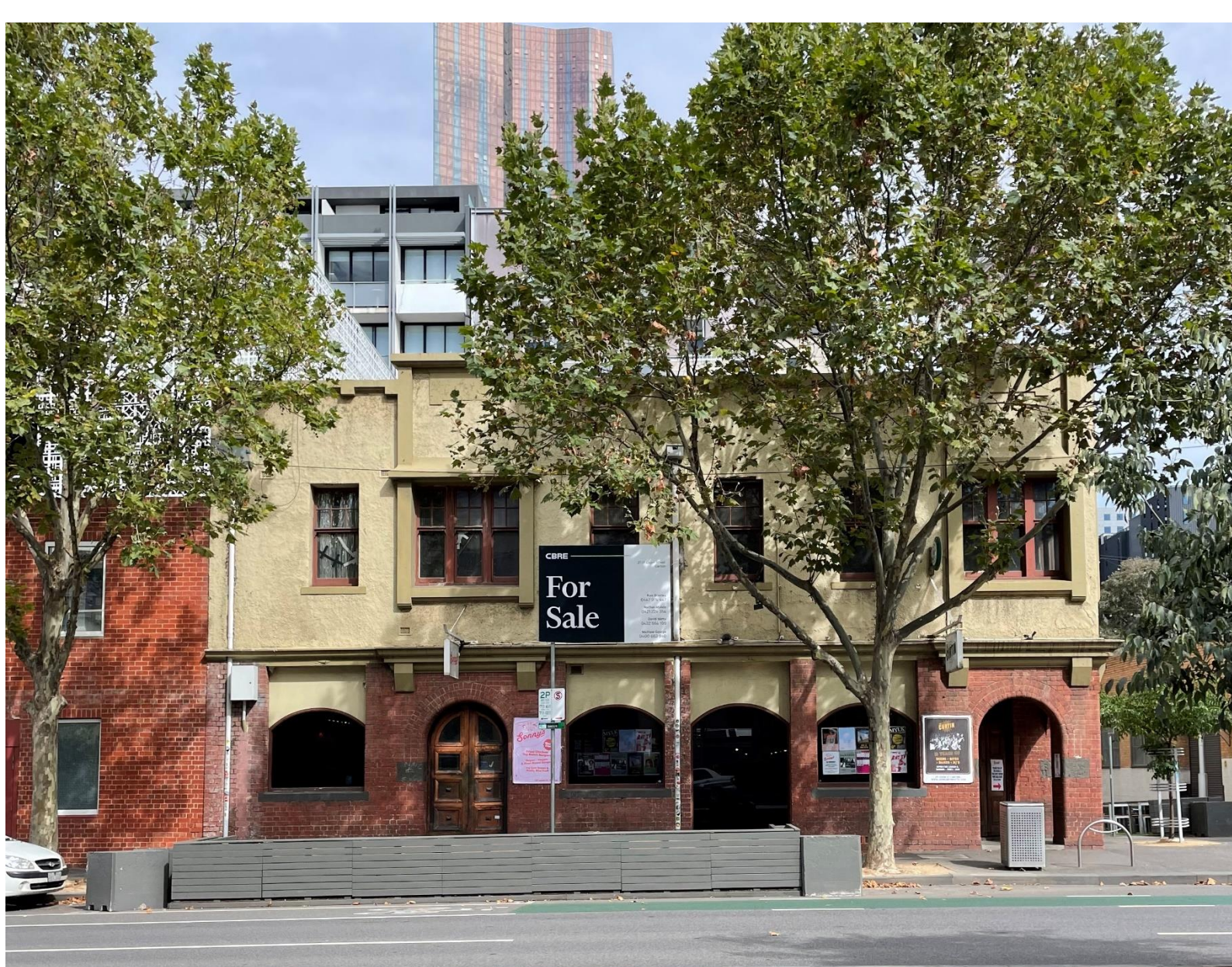


John Curtin Hotel

Supporting information for the Victorian Heritage Register
Nomination prepared by the National Trust of Australia
(Victoria) and the Victorian Trades Hall Council

March 2022



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History

Early History

The John Curtin Hotel is on the lands of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung of the Kulin Nations. Its site was sold as part of Crown allotments 1, 2 and 3 of Section 17 in the Parish of Jika Jika, one of the earliest land sales in Carlton. The Crown allotments were purchased in 1853 by R Dalzell (Lovell Chen 2019b, p 3).

Notably, in 1858, four allotments on the opposite side of Lygon Street were reserved as a site “for the erection of a Trades Hall” (Lovell Chen 2019b, p 3). The first, temporary Trades Hall was opened in May 1859.

The first hotel on the site of the present John Curtin Hotel opened in 1859-60, licensed to Michael O’Meara (Lovell Chen 2019b, p 3). In 1880, a tender notice was published in the *Argus* for “additions, repairs, painting etc”, noting George Wharton as the architect (*The Argus*, 1880). The Lygon Hotel, following works of the early 1880s, was described as being of 13 rooms, with a NAV of £190 (Lovell Chen 2019b, p 4).

Early Associations with Trades Hall

Immediately following its establishment, the Hotel was associated with the Victorian labour movement. The original Lygon Hotel and Trades Hall were established at the same time. Newspaper articles document the use of the Hotel by the labour movement as both a formal and informal meeting place.

An 1886 report in *The Age* describes a mass meeting of the Pressers’ Union called at Trades Hall:

A mass meeting of the union was called for last evening at the Trades Hall. About 200 members attended. Owing to there being no room at the Trades Hall available to accommodate the meeting, it was decided to adjourn to the Lygon Hotel. (The Age 1886)

The Hotel continued to be patronised by the growing union movement. Presentations, commemorations and meetings were held there, including the annual event held by the Operative Masons to entertain the Pioneers of the Eight Hours Movement (Lovell Chen 2019b, p 5). In 1910, the *Labor Call* reported that the new ‘host’ at the Lygon Hotel, Michael Collins, had taken ‘a very active part in Labor matters in Western Australia’ (Lovell Chen 2019b, p 5). Collins also placed an advertisement in a Ballarat newspaper calling on workers to visit the hotel (Lovell Chen 2019b, p 5).

The nearby Dover Hotel, located at 1-7 Lygon Street and constructed in ca. 1870, was also a notable union watering hole, with academic Gordon McCaskie noting that each hotel was frequented by factions in the union movement: “the left drank at the Dover, the right at [the Lygon Hotel]” (McCaskie 2005, p 426). The Dover Hotel closed in 1980, resulting in the John Curtin Hotel becoming the primary and oldest Hotel adopted by the Victorian union movement. (McCaskie 2005, p 426).

Redevelopment and Continued 20th century associations with the Victorian labour movement

The Lygon Hotel was redeveloped in 1915. An application was made to the City of Melbourne for the construction of a two-storey brick hotel, designed by Billing Peck & Kempter. It was constructed by builders Seccull Bros of Northcote (Lovell Chen 2019b, p 5). At this time, the hotel was owned by Carlton & United Breweries (CUB), who were dominant players in the beer trade and owned an increasing number of venues (Lovell Chen, 2019b, p 5). The beer industry was highly unionised, and the former CUB Malt House on Swanston Street was built the previous decade (Kirkby, Luckins, McConville, 2011).

The Lygon Hotel's redevelopment occurred in the context of the period between 1906 and 1915. This period saw the closure or redevelopment of many hotels as a result of increased regulation of licensed premises by the Licenses Reduction Board, which aimed to reduce the number of operating pubs and reduce alcohol consumption (Lovell Chen 2019b, p 5). The Lygon Hotel was rebuilt just prior to the introduction of 6 o'clock closing in 1916, at a time of transition in temperance campaigning from a reduction to the number of hotels through licensing reductions, to reducing the hours in which alcohol could be sold.

The strong associations between the John Curtin Hotel and the Union Movement are captured in the recent memoir of Max Ogden. He was born in Melbourne in 1938 and rose to prominence as a union representative with the AMWU, alongside contemporaries such as Laurie Carmichael, Bill Kelty and Bob Hawke. Over his sixty-year career as a unionist and activist, he was involved in many of the campaigns that shaped Australian society, such as around Vietnam, peace and nuclear disarmament, the role of women in the workforce, technology and industrial democracy. Ogden is a prominent and respected commentator and veteran of the Victorian union movement as a result of his lifetime dedicated to fighting for workers' rights.

Ogden's recent book *A Long View from the Left: From the CPA to the ALP, a lifetime of fighting for Australian workers' rights* (2020) traces 60 years of union and political history alongside his personal history. The following passages testifying to the socio-historical importance of the Curtin Hotel to the Victorian union movement:

It's fair to say that many of Australia's most significant industrial relations initiatives have been conceived or fleshed out in the back bar of the John Curtin Hotel, across the road as it is from the Victorian Trades Hall. In mid-1982, I was having a drink in that bar with Bill Kelty, who was by now the assistant secretary of the ACTU. Bill and I had met at the Curtin a few times over the previous year. He handed me a document which roughly outlined the principles of a proposed an 'accord' between the unions/ACTU and the Australian Labor Party. (Ogden 2020, p 128)

We began discussions with Ros Bower, who at the time was responsible for community arts at the Australia Council for the Arts, now the Australia Council, about how the union movement could access funding for an ACTU arts festival focussed on taking high-quality art of various forums into workplaces... I'd got to know Bob Hawke, then ACTU president, over a beer or two at the John Curtin Hotel. When I told him what we were up to he was delighted with the idea and pledged his support." (Ogden 2020, p 78)

The Lygon Hotel was the venue for the planning and publication of one of Victoria's most significant twentieth century novels. There, writer Frank Hardy and union leader George Seelaf schemed the printing of Hardy's 1950 novel *Power Without Glory*. It published through an underground printing

operation with books hand-sewn by meatworkers (Ettling 2022). In 1952, Hardy and Seelaf contributed to the establishment of the Australasian Book Society, a cooperative publishing society, an idea reportedly conceived over a beer with Seelaf at the Lygon Hotel, and motivated by the challenges he faced in publishing this book (McLaren 1996, p 35).

The Lygon Hotel also served a role for Victoria's feminist labour movement. In her memoir *Zelda*, feminist activist and unionist Zelda D'Aprano describes how she began drinking at the Lygon Hotel c1969, at a time when gender segregation in pubs was prevalent and regulated by law. After noticing that she was the only woman present, she set about inviting women into the space:

I didn't feel out of place or uncomfortable for I considered myself to be conversant in matters pertaining to trade unions, but I did wonder why there were no women in the hotel. I began to call into the hotel regularly and decided to invite other women so I could enjoy women's company. It wasn't long before women became regular customers of the John Curtin Hotel. (D'Aprano 1995, p 163)

Journalists covering the Trades Hall round also found a home at the John Curtin Hotel, which provided access to key union figures, and gossip. (Ettling 2022)

The name of the hotel was changed from the Lygon Hotel to the John Curtin Hotel in c1969. The name change reflected the hotel's close association with the labour movement and the Australian Labor party. A documented reason for the name change has not been established. In the late 1960s, a portrait of John Curtin hung in the back bar, perhaps motivating the name change (*The Age* 1969). It might also be speculated that following both Labor's state and federal election defeats in 1969, with the Labor Party having been in Opposition at the Commonwealth level since 1949 (20 years), and Victorian level since 1955 (14 years), the renaming of the Lygon Hotel to celebrate John Curtin reflected a nostalgia among the leftist pub patrons for their successful wartime Labor Prime Minister. In 1982, the John Curtin portrait of the hotel's namesake was stolen (*The Canberra Times* 1982) and quietly returned two months later (Callinan 2022).

Associations with ACTU and Bob Hawke

The John Curtin Hotel is highly significant for its associations with Bob Hawke, a major twentieth-century figure in the labour movement and Labor Party. Victorian Trades Hall hosted the first meeting of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) in May 1927. The ACTU developed a close and enduring association with Trades Hall and the broader precinct, occupying rooms at Trades Hall, before establishing an office at 17-25 Lygon Street in 1952.

Robert James Lee Hawke AC was born on 9 December 1929 in Bordertown, South Australia. In the late 1950s, he moved to Melbourne with his wife Hazel, to work at the ACTU. In 1969, he was elected as ACTU President. He became a prominent public figure, and gained a reputation for his ability to resolve complex industrial disputes (Bramston 2021, p 7).

Having won the inner-northern Melbourne seat of Wills in 1980, Hawke became leader of the ALP in 1983, and led the party to a landslide victory that same year. He won four consecutive elections and served as Prime Minister from March 1983 until December 1991, making him Australia's longest-serving Labor prime minister. The Hawke years saw landmark economic, social, and environmental reforms. He was one of Australia's most popular prime ministers, sustaining high approval ratings until his final year in office (Bramston 2021, p 7).

Hawke established a significant association with the John Curtin Hotel during his time at the ACTU, the formative years of his political career. Blanche d'Alpuget's biography of Hawke notes the

importance of the John Curtin Hotel to Hawke's role at the ACTU, describing it as his "Trades Hall office":

He had to work extremely long hours; to overcome the prejudice against him and to make himself as effective as possible as an advocate he needed to rub shoulders with unionists. This meant spending hours yarning and joking in the smokey, smelly, red-linoed and cream-walled "Trades Hall office"—the Lygon Hotel. He was rarely home. (d'Alpuget 2019, p 126)

Responding to news of the John Curtin Hotel's sale in 2022, Hawke's daughter Sue Pieters-Hawke reflected to *The Guardian* on the role of the hotel in the life of Hawke and her family:

It was Dad's watering hole, his second home ... It was a source of a lot of joy for Dad and a lot of joy, and occasional grief, for his family. ... Dad's drinking was a source of trouble at times ... but it was also how he got to know the trade union movement and form connections. He made amazing friendships at the Curtin, often across factional lines. (Cassidy 2022)

In the early 1970s, Hawke and ACTU Secretary Harold Souter made plans for the ACTU to purchase the John Curtin Hotel, as a commercial opportunity, along with the building next door owned by the Builders Labourers' Federation. In Hawke's biography, Cliff Dolan, who succeeded Hawke as ACTU President, reflected on the plans. Dolan noted that there were problems with the plan from the start, with members of the ACTU executive wary about the idea of the ACTU owning a pub. Hawke and Souter argued that the site could be redeveloped, but the executive wasn't convinced. Another union scuttled the plans by making a higher bid for the site, and then withdrew the offer once the ACTU had determined not to proceed. (d'Alpuget 2019, p 336)

Later, Hawke reflected on the lost commercial opportunity to use the profits from the pub to fund the union movement:

It seemed to me absurd that the unions were pouring money into the Lygon – it was the union pub and an awful bloody place, though full of character – and getting, as if it were, no return. If the ACTU bought it, the money could be recycled into the union system, and we could make it a better pub. (d'Alpuget 2019, pp 336-7)

Association with BLF and Norm Gallagher

The John Curtin Hotel is linked with Norm Gallagher, one of Victoria's most significant union leaders of the latter decades of the twentieth century, and a key figure in the Victorian heritage movement of the 1970s. The Builders Labourers' Federation (BLF) constructed offices opposite Trades Hall in 1958. The union was first registered with the Arbitration Court in 1911. It represented less skilled building workers, and gained prominence following the election of leading trade unionist Norm Gallagher as State Secretary in 1961 (Love 2005).

In the 1970s, the BLF played a pivotal role in the growing movement to protect Melbourne's heritage, leading "black bans" (also known as "green bans") on the redevelopment of historic places such as the Regent Theatre, the City Baths, Royal Parade, and the Bakery Hill historic site in Ballarat.

In his obituary of Bruno Coruzzi—the John Curtin Hotel publican from 1971 to 1979—former journalist Barry Donovan notes the hotel's connection with the BLF and Norm Gallagher. Donovan writes that Gallagher "occupied the front bar of the pub and would occasionally share a convivial beer with an aspiring developer such as Lloyd Williams, then on his way to the big-time Crown Casino with partner Ron Walker" (Donovan 2010).

In 1985, the *Canberra Times* reported that "Mr Gallagher was escorted by his supporters to the John Curtin Hotel, the labour movement's hotel opposite Trades Hall" following the Supreme Court's overturning of his convictions on corruption charges (for which he would ultimately be found guilty on retrial) (*The Canberra Times*, 1985)

Culture and Music at the John Curtin Hotel

The John Curtin Hotel has played a significant role in Melbourne's post-1980s urban rejuvenation. "The Curtin" is known across Victoria as a diverse, experimental and subversive venue.

The John Curtin has and continues to serve the cultural, education and community sectors that have grown in the Carlton precinct, alongside its traditional union and leftist clientele. This evolution in the John Curtin Hotel is represented at the site in its adaptation to become a live music venue, and its hosting of themed nights, to attract further patronage and to provide a community venue.

In recent decades, the John Curtin Hotel has played an important role as a live music venue. Historian Alex Ettling notes that during the 1980s, unions began to move out of Trades Hall, and the hotel sought to diversify its clientele. The upstairs was gutted, becoming a conference venue for hire, which has now become an important part of Melbourne's live music scene (Ettling 2022). In the 1980s, the Curtin hosted a fortnightly Aboriginal band night. Indigenous patronage was welcomed when many other venues restricted Indigenous attendance.

John Curtin Hotel band booker Paris Martine advises that in relation to other music venues in Victoria, the John Curtin Hotel can be characterised as small to medium-sized (Martine pers. comm. 2022). There are only three comparable-sized venues currently operating in Melbourne—Old Bar (Fitzroy), Last Chance Rock and Roll Saloon (Carlton) and the Leadbeater Hotel (Richmond). Uniquely among these venues, the John Curtin Hotel offers a stand-alone, purpose-built band room with a large stage, and sophisticated sound and lighting production capabilities.

Martine notes that due to its size and production capabilities, the venue has provided an opportunity for bands to develop their live shows, and has also been utilised by acclaimed international touring artists such as The Libertines and Todd Rundgren. Many bands who have played early shows at the John Curtin Hotel have gone on to achieve critical and commercial success, with recent examples including Amyl and the Sniffers, King Gizzard and the Lizard Wizard, and Cash Savage & the Last Drinks. The band room also caters to underground and experimental acts from Australian and abroad, continuing the hotel's cultural role as a place of diversity and cultural expression.

The importance of the hotel as a live music venue has been highlighted following the announcement that the building is to be sold (see Collection of Evidence under Criterion G).

The John Curtin as a place of Indigenous Resistance

In "Indigenous Music as a Space of Resistance", Dr Crystal McKinnon, an Amangu Yamatji academic, researcher and community organiser, discusses the importance of the John Curtin Hotel for Indigenous peoples, who during the 1970s were routinely excluded from pubs, bars and music venues on the basis of race (McKinnon 2010, p 255).

Uncle Alf Bamblett and others including Tony Lovett approached the Eastern Hill Public Bar to establish a regular night for Indigenous peoples. In an interview with Dr McKinnon, Uncle Alf describes the creation of the band "Just Us", later the "Stray Blacks", with members including Tony Lovett, Tony

Gorrie, and Janice Johnstone. The band found its home at the John Curtin Hotel, following the closure of the Eastern Hill Hotel. As noted by Dr McKinnon:

What they would create through their music was more than a band. Rather, their performance, the places they performed, and the spaces they and their audience created when they performed would generate critical sites of Indigenous resistance. (McKinnon 2010, p 255)

The hotel became a meeting place for both local Indigenous peoples and visitors. Uncle Alf noted in an interview with Dr McKinnon: “any blackfellas that came from interstate, [they would say] is JC’s on tonight, where do we go?” (McKinnon 2010, p 255)

The importance of the John Curtin is also recorded in the publication *Snapshots of Aboriginal Fitzroy*. The book features an interview with Uncle Alf Bamblett by Liz Cavanaugh, which describes the formation of the “Stray Blacks” and the importance of the John Curtin Hotel over as a “meeting place” (Bunj Consultants 2004, p 37).

In 2021 publication *Music city Melbourne: urban culture, history and policy*, an interview with Indigenous musician Grant Hansen discusses the formation of the band “Blackfire” in the 1990s, who played at the John Curtin Hotel and Trades Hall (Honman et al 2021). Exploring the Indigenous music scene in Melbourne, Hansen noted the importance of being “able to play for our own mob”, and the need to create an “industry within an industry because the doors weren’t always open to indigenous acts to engage to play in the wider mainstream music industry” (Honman et al 2021).

Contemporary Associations

The John Curtin Hotel continues to be an important meeting place for a specific and large community—the Victorian union movement and associated leftist groups— both on a day-to-day basis, and for important events and campaigns.

In 2017, the John Curtin Hotel hosted an “after party” for the “Yes” marriage equality campaign driven by Trades Hall. The evening culminated in an impromptu street festival outside the Curtin, at which premier Daniel Andrews spoke, acknowledging decades of LGBTIQ Activism (Cassidy 2022). Indeed, in recent years, queer, gay and lesbian nights at the Curtin included ‘Orlando’ and ‘Captain Moonlite’.

On Friday 17 May 2019, the day after Bob Hawke’s death at age 89, hundreds of mourners gathered at the John Curtin hotel to celebrate his life. Attendees included federal Opposition Leader Bill Shorten, Premier Daniel Andrews, and former Premier Steve Bracks. The three men gathered on the eve of that year’s Federal election to toast Labor’s longest-serving Prime Minister with a can of Hawke’s Brewing Co. Ale (Offer 2019). The event was widely captured by the media.

The associations of the John Curtin Hotel with the labour movement have also been acknowledged in popular and literary culture. In his novel *White Dog: Jack Irish Book 4*, Miles Franklin Award-winning novelist Peter Temple writes “Trades Hall and its annexe, the John Curtin Hotel, were just down the road” (Temple 2010, p 11).

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Comparisons to similar places recorded in the Victorian Heritage Register

Places associated with the union and labour movements

Former Eastern Hill Hotel (H0816)

The Former Eastern Hill Hotel, originally known as the Belvidere Hotel, is included in the Victorian Heritage Register for its association with the Victorian Eight Hour Day movement. In 1856 and subsequent years, the building provided the venue for functions and meetings relating to the eight-hour day movement. The building unionists supporting the eight-hour day, who used the hotel as their headquarters, were known as “belviderites”. The hotel is no longer trading.

While the Eastern Hill Hotel had C19th associations to the union movement, the John Curtin Hotel has associations with the union movement in C19th, C20th, and C21st. The construction of Trades Hall in 1859 and the subsequent development of the John Curtin Hotel across the road from it resulted in an enduring and well documented association between the movement and the John Curtin Hotel which continues to the present day.

Trades Hall (H0663)

The Victorian Heritage Register Statement of Significance for Trades Hall notes that it is significant to the state of Victoria for the following reasons:

Trades Hall is of historical significance for its associations with trade union, Labor Party, and State and Australian history. The existing building occupies the site where the first, temporary Trades Hall was opened in May 1859. Since its construction, the building has been the site of numerous important events in union and working class history. Its origins lie in the successful eight hours day movement, in which Victorian artisans led the world, and has long been regarded as a splendid monument to this achievement. In addition, the building has significant associations with the development of Victoria's trade unions, numerous unions having had their headquarters in the building, and with the early history of the Australian Council of Trade Unions, hosting the first meeting of the ACTU in May 1927. As Australia's oldest and largest Trades Hall, it stands as a symbol of the importance of organised labour within Australian society. Its relatively intact interior and exterior provide an evocative testament to the living traditions of the Australian Labor movement. In particular, flags, banners and honour boards (including one commemorating the leaders of the eight hours movement) are significant artefacts tracing more than a century of union history, and are important historical records in their own right. Trades Hall's role in Australia's political history is also significant. In particular, activities leading to the birth of the Labor Party and

support of the great industrial campaigns of the 1890s took place here. The direct connection with the ALP was maintained for almost 100 years, the Victorian headquarters of the Party being based in Trades Hall until 1972.

Trades Hall is of social significance as a centre of radical and working class politics and activism in Victoria for over 100 years. Major campaigns and struggles that have had important ramifications for Victorian and Australian society have been coordinated from Trades Hall, and the building continues to serve as a focus of union organisation and left-wing political activity.

The John Curtin Hotel, while having a different function, is historically and socially significant for the same reasons. While the “official” business of the unions took place in Trades Hall, the role of the John Curtin Hotel as a formal and informal meeting place was similarly significant, and is well documented in union and Labor histories.

Like Trades Hall, the social significance of the John Curtin Hotel as a place of working-class politics and activism endures to this day. This is demonstrated in its ongoing use, its role in significant events such as the “Yes” campaign for marriage equality, and the outpouring of sentiment from the union movement following the announcement of the building’s sale in 2022.

Together, Trades Hall and the John Curtin form a cultural and historic urban landscape which illustrates the history of the union and labour movements in Victoria.

Places associated with Prime Ministers

Ballara, Point Lonsdale (VHR H1126)—Alfred Deakin’s family retreat while Prime Minister)

Bruce Manor, Frankston (VHR H1998)—Residence of Stanley Melbourne Bruce for one year while Prime Minister)

Airlie, Melbourne (VHR H0722)— Childhood residence of Stanley Melbourne Bruce

Three private residences of Australian Prime Ministers are currently included in the Victorian Heritage Register. All demonstrate architectural significance at a state level. One (Airlie) is primarily included in the Register for its architectural values. Ballara and Bruce Manor were designed for Alfred Deakin and Stanley Bruce respectively during their prime ministerships, thereby providing evidence of their political and personal achievements.

There are no places in the Register which are included for their association with Bob Hawke. Hawke’s substantial and enduring association with the John Curtin Hotel during his time at the ACTU, described by his biographer Blanche d’Alpuget as his “Trades Hall Office”, is expressed in the fabric of the place, which still functions as a hotel and informal meeting place for the union movement. His daughter Sue Pieters-Hawke has described the importance of the hotel as a place to form relationships in the trade union movement, laying the foundation for his role as Prime Minister.

Following Hawke’s death in 2019, members of the union and Labor movements met at the John Curtin Hotel to commemorate his life, including federal Opposition Leader Bill Shorten, Premier Daniel Andrews, and former Premier Steve Bracks.

Places associated with the Builders Labourers Federation

Regent Theatre (VHR HO690)

The Regent Theatre is one of a number of places in the Register that were saved from demolition as a result of black bans by the Builders Labourers Federation. Its Statement of Significance notes that:

The Regent Theatre is of social significance because of its involvement in the conservation battles of the 1970s that contributed to the creation of Victoria's historic buildings legislation, the first in Australia. The theatre's popularity led to it becoming the subject of Melbourne's longest running conservation debate, when, after closing in 1970, Builders Laborers Federation bans prevented its demolition as part of the development of a long-sought city square. The Regent then remained empty for over 25 years as debate raged over its future and the design of the square. The Plaza was incorporated in the square development, but it wasn't until 1996 that the Regent was reopened after extensive restoration work. The long preservation battle over the Theatre provides an interesting tale of changing attitudes to heritage protection. Originally not considered architecturally significant enough to be incorporated on the Historic Buildings Register in the 1970s, greater acceptance of 20th century buildings and of the concept of social and historic significance as distinct from architectural significance, led to the registration of the theatre in 1988. The heritage battles that were fought over the Regent and other historical buildings in the early 1970s forced the State Government to introduce a system to register and protect historic buildings in 1974.

The John Curtin Hotel, located near the offices of the Builders Labourers Federation established in 1958, was a meeting place in the 1970s for Secretary Norm Gallagher, who played a pivotal role in the growing movement to protect Melbourne's heritage.

Assessment against Heritage Council Criteria

CRITERION A

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

The John Curtin Hotel is significant for its historical association with the trade union movement, Trades Hall, and the Labor Party from its establishment in 1860. The strength of the historical association is due to its proximity to Trades Hall, established in 1859, and surrounding union offices and places of memorialisation. Throughout its history, the John Curtin Hotel has been a formal and informal meeting place for the union movement.

The association of the John Curtin Hotel is evident both externally and internally in the physical fabric of the place, which continues to operate as a hotel. Externally, it is substantially intact to its period of redevelopment in 1915. Internally, the front bar and other spaces facilitate its ongoing use as a hotel, and demonstrate its historical significance as a meeting place.

The John Curtin Hotel has been the site of numerous important events, including trade union meetings, the union movement's celebration of the successful "Yes" campaign for marriage equality, and the unofficial wake following Bob Hawke's death in 2019.

The union movement and the Labor Party are of historical importance to the state of Victoria. The John Curtin Hotel allows the history of the union movement to be understood as part of the broader cultural landscape of Trades Hall. Importantly, it illustrates an aspect of the movement's history that is currently not represented in the Register, namely the role of "informal" congregation, which has undoubtedly influenced Victoria's social and political history.

The John Curtin is also significant for its role as a live music venue from the late-20th century to the present day. It is also significant for its associations with the Italian community and LGBTQ+ communities. It also significant for its associations with Victoria's First Peoples, as an important venue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander musicians and communities from at least the 1970s to the 1990s, at a time when First Peoples were routinely excluded from pubs, bars and music venues on the basis of race. These various socio-historical and socio-continuing associations warrant further research and assessment.

CRITERION G

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

As a meeting place, the John Curtin Hotel has a strong and enduring association with the labour movement in Victoria, including the trade union movement and the Australian Labor Party. The trade union movement comprises the executives and members of Victorian trade unions and their peak bodies, including the Trades Hall Council of Victoria and the Australian Council of Trade Unions.

The trade union movement has had a connection with the John Curtin Hotel from its establishment in 1860, opposite the first Trades Hall, and this connection endures to the present day. Similarly, the Australian Labor Party has had a strong connection with the John Curtin Hotel throughout the history of the party and its predecessors, demonstrated through the gathering of Labor leaders following the death of Bob Hawke.

The intensity of the attachment of the labour movement to the John Curtin Hotel has been well documented throughout the hotel's history through news publications, memoirs, and political biographies. The intensity of the movement's enduring attachment to the place has also been demonstrated through the outpouring of sentiment following an announcement in February 2022 that the building is to be sold, and may not continue operating as a hotel into the future (see collection and analysis of evidence below).

These connections also resonate across the broader Victorian community. Throughout its history, the hotel has been a meeting place for both local and visiting members of the labour movement, and its significance resonates beyond the local community to the broader movement.

The John Curtin is also significant for its role as a live music venue and alternative and experimental space from the late-20th century to the present day.

CRITERION H

Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Victoria's history.

The John Curtin Hotel is significant for its association with Bob Hawke, Australia's longest-serving Labor Prime Minister. Hawke frequented the hotel while during his time at the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), a formative period in his life which preceded his election to the Federal Seat of Wills in 1980, and his time as Prime Minister from 1983 to 1981. Hawke's biographer, Blanche d'Alpuget, described the hotel as his "Trades Hall Office". At the John Curtin Hotel, Hawke formed relationships and made decisions which would shape his career and contribution to Victoria's history. Following his death on the eve of the 2019 Federal Election, members of the labour movement, including Opposition Leader Bill Shorten, Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews, and former premier Steve Bracks, gathered to celebrate his life and legacy.

The John Curtin Hotel is also significant for its association with the Builders Labourers' Federation and Norm Gallagher, its state secretary from 1970 to 1991. Gallagher played a pivotal role in the movement to protect Melbourne's heritage, leading "black bans" on the redevelopment of historic places such as the Regent Theatre, the City Baths, Royal Parade, and the Bakery Hill historic site in Ballarat. He frequented the John Curtin Hotel, which was located in close proximity to the nearby BLF offices. He was escorted there by his supporters following the Supreme Court's overturning of his convictions on corruption charges in 1985.

Evidence Under Criterion G

Social media

On 15 February 2022, the operators of the Curtin Hotel announced on Facebook that the owners of the hotel had decided to sell it, and that their current lease expiring in November would not be renewed.

The [Facebook post](#) received significant engagement, including

- 887 Comments
- 358 Shares
- 3.1k reactions

Media

The announcement sparked significant interest across broadcast, print, and online media, with articles in the Age, Herald Sun, Guardian, Overland, Meanjin, and coverage on 3AW, ABC Melbourne, and 7 News (see references for examples).

Petitions

In the wake of the announcement of the sale, two petitions were established:

Petition No. 1—megaphone.org.au

The Trades Hall Council of Victoria created a [Save the John Curtin Hotel petition](#) on megaphone.org.au, noting the hotel's important as a meeting place for the labour movement, and as a live music venue.

The John Curtin hotel is for sale and we need to save it from being turned into another soulless apartment block.

The Curtin is a vital landmark live music venue for emerging artists. Melbourne needs more live music spaces, not less.

The Curtin has also for 150 years been a second home and unofficial meeting place for the Victorian labour movement. There is not a Labor Prime Minister or Premier in modern memory who hasn't enjoyed a beer at the front bar. We don't want to see it turned into apartments by developers, we want it to remain as the iconic Melbourne pub that it is.

As of 15 March 2022, it had received 1,970 online signatures.

Petition No. 2—change.org

A [Save the Curtin from development!](#) petition created by Jeremy Trott on change.org also emphasises the hotel's cultural association with the Labour movement and importance as a live music venue.

The John Curtin Hotel on Lygon St - one of Melbourne's oldest pubs and best live music venues, with a rich cultural heritage associated with the labour movement - has announced that its landlord is selling the premises for commercial development. The likely end result of this would mean it is turned into apartments.

This would be a devastating blow both to Melbourne's music scene, which has suffered greatly from the lack of support during the Covid-19 pandemic, and to Melbourne's architectural heritage, which has not been protected by the grossly inadequate heritage listing system.

As of 15 March 2022 it had received 3,323 online signatures.

Call-out to supporters by Victorian Trades Hall Council

On 8 March 2022, the Victorian Trades Hall Council put a call-out to supporters to share their stories and personal connections to the John Curtin Hotel.

As of 17 March, 194 responses had been received. The National Trust then coded responses according to the key values expressed. Many responses supported the value of the hotel as a live music venue. Many respondents also identified the importance of the hotel to the union movement. A smaller number of respondents identified the importance of the hotel to students and staff at RMIT and the University of Melbourne; and 27 respondents included other reasons for the significance of the place, including associations with life milestones and relationships.

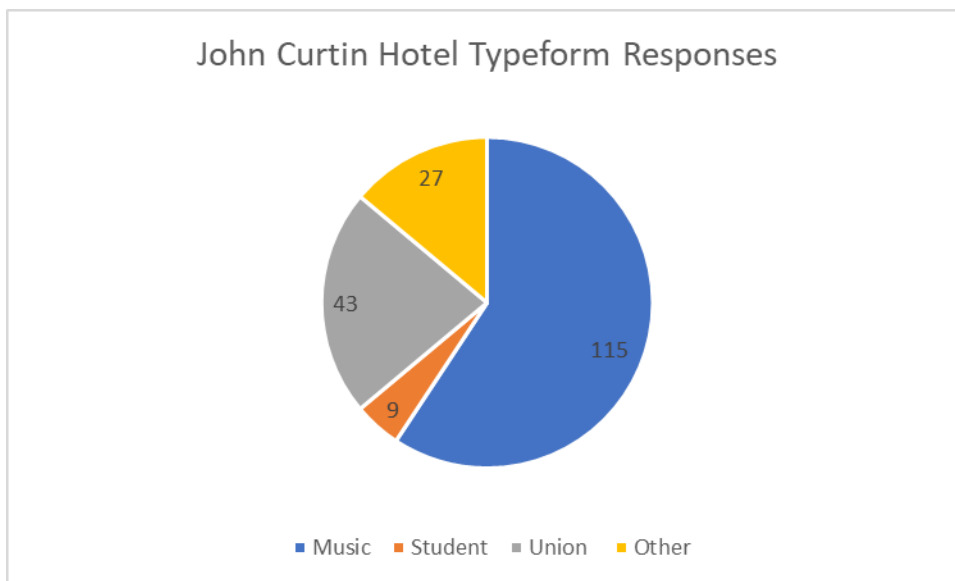


Figure 1: Breakdown of John Curtin Hotel typeform responses.

A selection of quotes demonstrating these associations is provided below:

The first ever fundraising event I organised was upstairs at the Curtin. I was 16, not yet old enough to even order a beer at the bar, but I still remember the pulsing energy in the room that night of activists milling and dancing together.

I remember leaning against its brick walls on the hot November evening that we celebrated the marriage equality Yes vote, talking elatedly with strangers.

Countless times now I've crashed in through that archway door to sink into one of those booth seats with fellow ratbags, to debrief and unwind after a meeting or a rally. Every time I'm there I feel a sense of the thousands of others whose feet have worn in those floors over the decades, who have pitched in their bit to fight for things to be better in the world. It's such a beating heart of Melbourne's activist community.—Anna Langford, 11 March 2022

As a Melbourne Uni student around in the 2000s, i would regularly come here to debate politics. I remember meeting major union figures here and discussing whether or not marriage equality would ever be achieved. Ive sung Solidarity Forever more than once at yhis pub. It still gives me goosebumps. The comradery. I could always feel the history in the walls at this place. Knocking this building down would be like knocking down Flinders St Station or the State Library. You can't do it. So many great nights here where world views were formed and important decisions made.—Elliot Wall, 10 March 2022

The Curtin means so much to so many. It's the first pub I visited when I turned 18, and it's remained my go-to ever since. This sentiment is shared by so many, particularly the artists, and gig-loving community the Curtin fosters. As goes the story for so many important venues, the Curtin is an essential stepping stone for musicians moving from small venues to large venues. It hosts hundreds of shows every year, serves thousands of people every single week all while being an incredibly inclusive and culturally significant space. We can't let another venue die, especially somewhere that has hosted so many iconic Victorians during its lifespan. Save the Curtin! For me and everyone.—Daniel Devlin, 10 March 2022

After I finished my "Union Winter" internship at Trades Hall, the other participants and I all celebrated by going to the Curtin. There was no debate, or discussion as to where we'd go, it had to be "JCs". We weren't being original, we were taking part in a tried and tested Union tradition.

It's obligatory, almost to the point of an enforced law that you go to the Curtin after doing anything Trades Hall related. In doing this, taking part of this small ritual, you feel that you are continuing an old legacy. It also helps that it's a really good pub in addition to the historical significance.

I remember all my trips to the Curtin, and while there have made some of my best, and closest friends. It is an institution of huge significance. Both personally, to many of my friends and I and to the city of Melbourne as a whole.—Lukas Matovinovic, 9 March 2022

I have spent so many nights as a union member, organising with other members at the Curtin. It is the heart of the union movement in Melbourne! It can't be lost to developers, it would be antithetical to everything the union members in its rooms have fought for. — Anonymous

Images



Figure 2: John Curtin Hotel Victoria Street elevation, 2022 (National Trust)



Figure 3: John Curtin Hotel Earl Street Elevation, 2022 (CBRE Real Estate)



Figure 4: John Curtin Hotel Front Bar, 2022 (CBRE Real Estate)



Figure 5: John Curtin Hotel side bar (ground floor), 2022 (CBRE Real Estate)

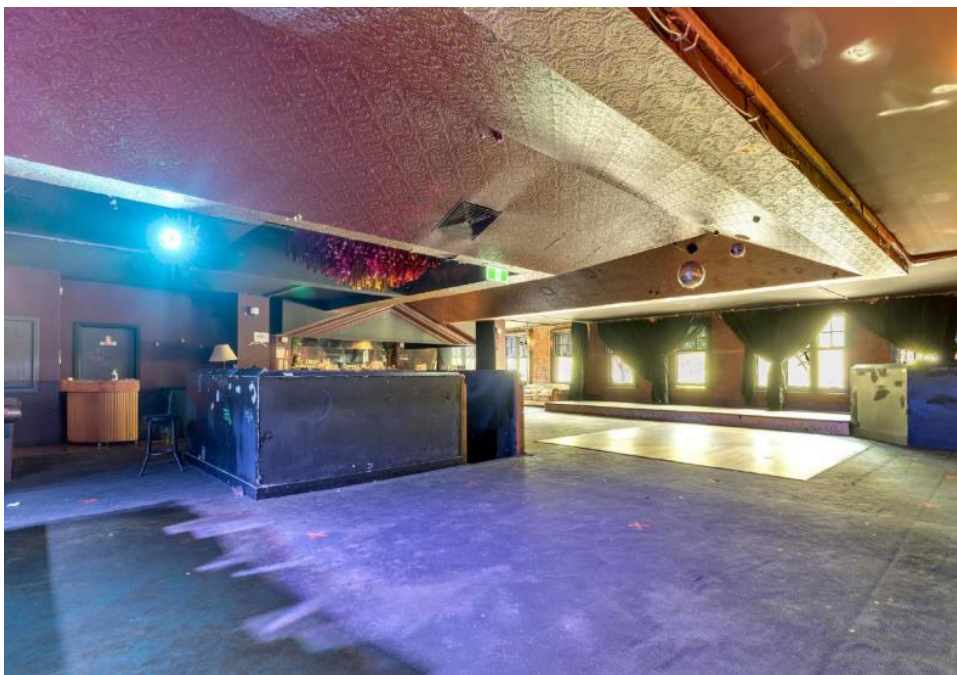


Figure 6: John Curtin Hotel Band Room, 2022 (CBRE Real Estate)

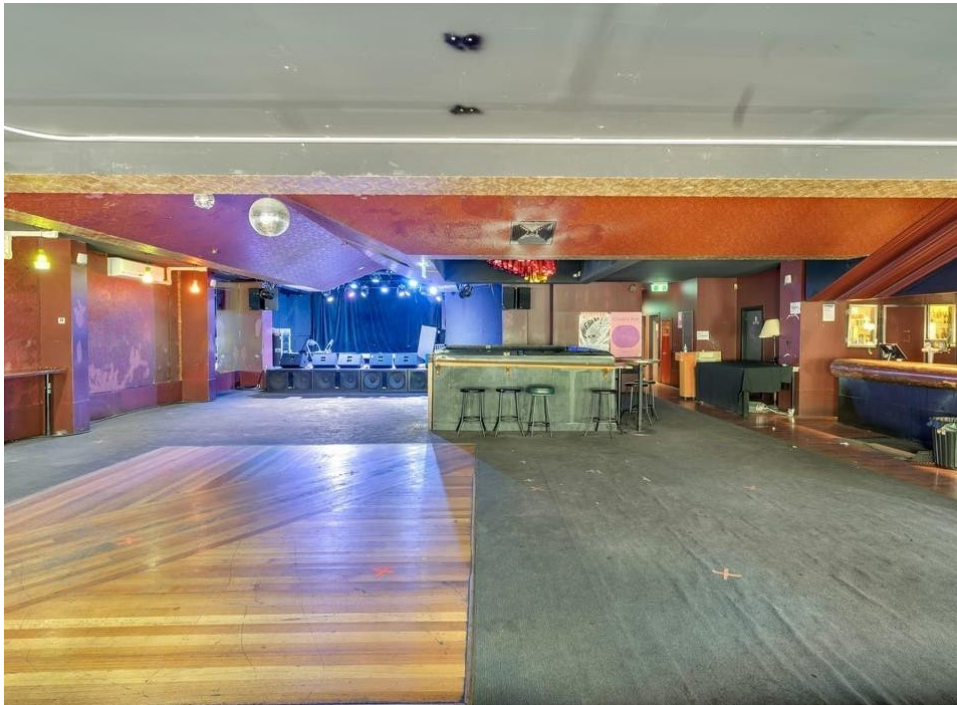


Figure 7: John Curtin Band Room, 2022



Figure 8: Labor Leader Bill Shorten, Premier of Victoria Daniel Andrews, and former Victorian Premier Steve Bracks have a Hawkes Beer in memory of former Prime Minister Bob Hawke at the John Curtin Hotel on May 17, 2019 in Melbourne, Australia. (Ryan Pierse/Getty Images)



Figure 9: Save the Curtin Hotel, artwork for *Overland* by Sam Wallman, 2022