Attachment D

Revised Inventory Sheet – 40-42 Flinders Street, Darlinghurst – Former Taxi Club

Heritage inventory sheet

Based on the NSW Heritage Office State Heritage Inventory sheet

ITEM DETAILS			
Name of Item	**Former Taxi Club**		
Former name	**Grosvenor Club, Gordon's Piano Warehouse**		
Item type	**Built**		
Address	Number **40-42**	Street **Flinders Street**	Suburb **Darlinghurst**
Property description	Lot **1**		DP **773206**
Use	Current **Commercial**		Former **Commercial, social club**
Statement of significance	The building at 40 Flinders Street, Darlinghurst, has some historical significance as a rare example of a purpose-built piano warehouse, of which a comparatively large number were established in Oxford Street, Darlinghurst, in Paddington, and along the northern end of Flinders Street in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The site is also significant because of its occupation from 1956 by the Grosvenor Club, a recreational facility for taxi drivers, reflecting consolidation of licensed clubs in NSW following amendments to legislation in 1954. Better known as the Taxi Club, the Grosvenor Club became an early, important and enduring LGBTIQA+ recreational venue when it started being patronised by drag queens following the opening of Les Girls at Kings Cross in 1963. The building has associations with Sydney's gay, drag and transgender communities, who are of importance to the cultural history of Sydney. Its early, enduring and distinctive use as a venue frequented by the LGBTIQA+ community is considered to be rare. The exterior of 40 Flinders Street is a modest and late example of the Victorian Free Classical style. The façade of 42 Flinders Street was modified to match the façade of 40 Flinders Street circa 1990 and does not have significance. The buildings have been extensively modified over the years.		
Level of significance	State: No	Local: Yes	
Heritage listings	Located in the Paddington Urban Conservation Area.		
DESCRIPTION			
Designer	Not ascertained		
Builder	Not ascertained		
Construction years	1903-1904: 40 Flinders Street. 1920: two-story building including garage on Chisholm Street. 1990s: modifications to the façade of 42 Flinders Street)		

Physical Description	40-42 Flinders Street is a moderately prominent landmark in this section of the street. It comprises the three storey 40 Flinders Street on the northern section of the site and the two storey 42 Flinders Street on the southern side of the site, which have been amalgamated into one building. The Flinders Street façade of the building, most particularly that of 40 Flinders Street, is a modest and relatively late example of the Victorian Free Classical style, although it has been modified by the removal of the uppermost section of the parapet. The façade of 42 Flinders Street, while replicating that of its neighbour, resulted from modification to the façade associated with works to the building during the 1950s, around 1990. Elements of the facades that reflect the Free Classical influence include the stucco wall lining, decorative mouldings and cornice at parapet level (40 Flinders Street), the label moulds above window openings and the details of window sills. Comparison of the double hung windows with those appearing in archival photographs indicates that the existing windows are not original. Circular metal plaques associated with a suspended awning remain in place and are adjacent to label moulds of first floor windows at 40 Flinders Street. The awning over the Flinders Street footpath is relatively recent in construction, as are the shopfronts. Elevations on Chisholm Street are utilitarian - plain rendered wall surfaces, regularly spaced double hung windows and wide vehicular openings at street level. The parapet of 42 Flinders Street, however, has a gently curved profile, confined by squat piers at either end. Double hung windows in the rear elevation of 40-42 Flinders Street are not original. The roof over 40 Flinders Street is a skillion covered by metal sheeting while much of the roof over 42 Flinders appears to be trafficable. The interior of the building was not inspected. Internal photographs have from real estate agents' websites available on the internet indicate that the original timber floor structure of 40 Flinders Street remained in place in 2021 and was exposed.
Physical condition	The building appears to be in good condition.
Modification and Dates	Proposed modifications to 40-42 Flinders Street are listed in the City of Sydney street cards for the property. They include: 40 Flinders Street • 1920: fire escape. • 1925: awning. • 1926: alterations (not specified). • 1957: alterations to first and second floors. • 1979: alterations to second floor windows. • 1984: fire rated ceiling on first floor. • 1985: internal alterations to first floor. • 1986: replacement of flooring second floor. 42 Flinders Street • 1955: major alterations and additions. • 1982: alterations to club premises; mechanical ventilation to first floor. • 1985: internal alterations to first floor. • 1986: replacement of flooring second floor.
Archaeological potential	Not ascertained.

HISTORY

The coastal regions of Sydney between Port Jackson and Botany Bay are the ancestral territories of the Eora people. The traditional owners of the land now within the City of Sydney local government area were the Cadigal (Gadigal) people. In common with other tribes living by Sydney Harbour, the Cadigal lived in harmony with the natural resources within their country, fishing from canoes or hunting the animals that lived in surroundings. The tribe appears to have moved within their territory in response to the seasons and family connections. Shell middens and other archaeological remains in the area provide material evidence of many centuries of sustained connection to the land that also sustained them. The arrival of white settlers caused the wholesale disruption of traditional life and the cultural practices of the Eora people generally. Despite enormous challenges, today many Indigenous people identify as Eora and maintain cultural practices and a connection to Country.

The site of 40-42 Flinders Street occupies part of 70 acres (28.33 hectares) of land granted to commissary John Palmer in April 1794. Palmer was forced to sell his estate to meet his debts and his Surry Hills Estate was sold in October 1814. The allotment of land that was to include the site of 40-42 Flinders Street was sold to Corporal James Chisholm of the NSW Corps (1772-1837), who became a prosperous merchant in the colony of NSW. Although he sold most of his Surry Hills purchase almost immediately, Chisholm retained a triangular section bounded by the South Head Road (later Oxford Street), Botany Street (later renamed Flinders Street) and the edge of the Sydney Common. After his death Chisholm's property was placed under the jurisdiction of trustees but his widow Mary was given power of sale.

On 30 May 1854, Mary Chisholm conveyed the title of Lot 25 Section 1 of the so-called Chisholm Estate, bounded by Botany Street and Chisholm Street, to contractor John Roberts. He constructed a house on the block of land. Roberts is noted as the head of a household at 40 Botany Street (later 42 Flinders Street) in the 1858 edition of *Sands and Kenny's Commercial and General Sydney Directory for 1858-59*. Some years later Roberts and his wife Sarah acquired the adjoining Lots 26 and 27 of Section 1, which were conveyed to them by Mary Chisholm on 7 April 1869.

Sarah Roberts died in October 1873, followed by her husband in January 1875. In March 1882 John Roberts, presumably Roberts' son, settled a substantial amount (if not all) of the property on his wife Rose. By the mid-1880s Lot 25 of Section 1, which by then had been renumbered 42 Botany Street, was mostly covered by buildings. A two storey brick house fronted Botany Street and a large timber shed occupying about half the allotment faced Chisholm Street. Lot 26 remained largely undeveloped apart from a timber shed on Chisholm Street and Lot 27 had been sold. Botany Street was renamed Flinders Street during 1893.

On 26 March 1903, Rose Roberts conveyed the title of 42 Flinders Street to Mrs Mary Gordon. This was followed by the conveyance of 40 Flinders Street to Mrs Gordon on 18 May 1903. Mary Gordon was married to importer and piano merchant James Gordon, who established his business around 1884 and whose premises were at this time located at 379 Bourke Street, just to the south of Oxford Street. 40 Flinders Street was quickly developed after it was purchased by the Gordons, and by the end of 1904 the business relocated from Bourke Street into a new three storey building:

> The large and commodious premises occupied by Gordon's pianos, at 40 Flinders Street, near Oxford Street, is proof positive of the extensive business done by them. A visit of inspection is regarded by the sight of one of the largest and best assorted stocks in the city, comprising as it does pianofortes by all the leading makers, at prices which only inspection will convince.

James Gordon died in March 1908. A year later his widow Mary married Edward Barrett and went by the name of Mary Gordon Barrett. The piano business was evidently prospering, as young architect Reginald Prevost was commissioned to design and document alterations and additions to 40 Flinders Street, which included a matching extension at 42 Flinders Street. Plans were lodged with Council in April 1911 and approved, but the works did not proceed.

In May 1920 plans were approved for a two storey garage at the rear of 42 Flinders Street for Mrs Gordon Barrett. The drawing was lodged with Council by William M Ahern and the approved building was subsequently constructed.

Leases on parts of the property, most probably 40 Flinders Street, were taken out by manufacturer Arnold Bertolloti in September 1920 and April 1921. Gordon's Pianos occupied at least a part of the building until 1924. At this time 42 Flinders Street was leased to Mrs Kate Carroll, who occupied the house until the early 1930s. For the rest of the 1920s and into the 1930s, 40 Flinders Street was leased to various small companies.

Listings in *Wise's New South Wales Post Office Commercial Directory* published from 1933 onwards do not include entries for 42 Flinders Street. However, the Band of Hope, a temperance organisation, was listed in the 1933 and 1934 editions at 40 Flinders Street. This was followed by the Social Service Committee, which may have been affiliated with the Band of Hope and was listed until the late 1940s.

Mary Gordon died in June 1940 and 40-42 Flinders Street subsequently came under the jurisdiction of the Perpetual Trustee Company. It sold 42 Flinders Street to P Page & Company in March 1945 and 40 Flinders Street to Repins Pty Limited in January 1948. The nature of P Page & Company's business has not been ascertained. Repins Pty Limited controlled a chain of coffee shops in Sydney established by Russian émigré Ivan Repin (1888-1949) during 1930. Repins applied to convert 40 Flinders Street to a factory and store and may have roasted coffee beans there. 42 Flinders Street appears to have been acquired for investment purposes and was tenanted.

The architectural firm of Edwards Madigan & Torzillo was engaged by P Page & Company in 1955 to design and document alterations and additions to 42 Flinders Street, which effectively removed the evidence of earlier residential use. These included a Modernist style façade addressing Flinders Street and the construction of an additional level. In March 1956 Repins Pty Limited transferred the title to 40 Flinders Street to shopkeepers Charles Sailer and Allan Pitt.

The Grosvenor Club Ltd applied to the City of Sydney to use the first and second floors of 40 Flinders Street as its premises in August 1956. A lease was signed with Charles Sailer and Allan Pitt for occupancy and use of the two floors of the building on 5 November 1956. The Club applied to carry out various alterations in 1957. In subsequent years it became known as the Taxi Club and as an LGBTIQA+ venue. It is claimed to be Sydney's oldest such venue.

The Grosvenor Club was originally a licensed 24-hour social club for taxi drivers. It followed form changes to legislation that allowed far more licensed clubs in NSW in 1946 than then existed. There is some confusion about clubs for taxi drivers during the second half of the 1940s. It was claimed during 1948 that an Eastern Suburbs Transport Club at Bondi club was managed as a service to taxi drivers and used as "a kind of clearing house between shifts and while waiting to take over their cabs." There was evidently a Taxi Drivers Club in Oxford Street, Darlinghurst and another at Paddington, which was described as a "disorderly house". The Grosvenor Club, which was also known as the Taxi Club, was first established at 35 Flinders Street in 1949.

The Grosvenor Club's association with the LGBTIQA+ community was established in the first half of the 1960s and accompanied the rise of a flourishing drag scene in Sydney. Performers from the drag cabaret Les Girls at Kings Cross came to the Club after their shows had finished, attracted by its long opening hours and in turn attracting a homosexual clientele. At that time there were very few recreational venues available to Sydney's drag or transgender community, let alone the lesbian and gay male communities. Les Girls opened in 1963 in a purpose-built venue at 32 Darlinghurst Road, Kings Cross, commissioned by Abe Saffron and Sammy Lee. It was known as the Carousel Club. Les Girls ran until 1994.

P Page and Company sold 42 Flinders Street to Membrana Pty Limited around the beginning of 1981. This was followed by the sale of 40 Flinders Street to a company called Atora Pty Limited in 1983. Altora subsequently sold the building to Membrana Pty Limited around the beginning of 1988. In the meantime, a building application had been approved in May 1982 for alterations to the buildings that allowed the Taxi Club to expand into the first floor of 42 Flinders Street.

At some time between 1982 and 1996 the facade of 42 Flinders Street was modified so that details of the façade of 40 Flinders Street were replicated. The exact date this took place has not been ascertained. As well, the third level added to 42 Flinders Street in the mid-1950s was apparently removed to provide a trafficable open area.

The Taxi Club went into voluntary administration in April 2012 and closed the following month. Attempts to amalgamate with another club were unsuccessful. Following this the owners of the building, Oxford Commercial Real Estate, would not enter a long-term lease arrangement so that the Club was forced to close. At that time it had around 3,000 members (and 32 poker machines).

HISTORICAL THEMES		
Australian Theme	**State theme**	**Local theme**
3 Developing local, regional and national economies	Commerce	Merchandising of pianos in the locality in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
4 Building settlements, towns and cities	Towns suburbs and villages	Growth and consolidation of Darlinghurst in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
8 Developing Australia's cultural life	Leisure	Clubs in the locality - Grosvenor/Taxi Club. LGBTQIA+ community patronage.

HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT	
Historic significance SHR criteria (a)	The building at 40 Flinders Street has some historical significance as a surviving purpose-built piano warehouse in the locality. A comparatively large number were established in Oxford Street, Paddington, and the northern end of Flinders Street in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The slightly earlier and architecturally superior warehouse at 55 Flinders Street, completed in 1899, was demolished less than 20 years later. The building at 40 Flinders Street became the home of the Grosvenor Club, a recreational facility for taxi drivers, and mirrors the growth and consolidation of licensed clubs in NSW following amendments to legislation in 1954. Its patronage by drag queens following the opening of Les Girls in 1963 because of its 24 hour licence and final closure in 2012 make it a very early and enduring LGBTIQA+ recreational venue. The former Taxi Club at 40-42 Flinders Street meets the threshold for listing at a Local level.
Historical association SHR criteria (b)	The building at 40-42 Flinders Street is not associated with any individual of importance to the cultural history of Sydney or NSW. However, it has associations with Sydney's gay, drag and transgender communities, who are of importance to the cultural history of Sydney. The former Taxi Club at 40-42 Flinders Street meets the threshold for listing at a Local level.

Aesthetic significance SHR criteria (c)	The exterior of 40 Flinders Street is a modest and late example of the Victorian Free Classical style. The façade of 42 Flinders Street was modified to match the façade of 40 Flinders Street circa 1990 and does not have significance. The buildings have been extensively modified and do not demonstrate a high degree of creativity or technical achievement, nor are they outstanding examples of an architectural style. There are far better examples of the Victorian Free Classical style elsewhere in Sydney. The former Taxi Club at 40-42 Flinders Street does not meet the threshold for listing at a State or Local level.
Social significance SHR criteria (d)	When it was the Taxi Club, 40-42 Flinders Street, is very likely to have significance for Sydney's LGBTIQA+ community, although further research is required to confirm this. The former Taxi Club at 40-42 Flinders Street is likely to meet the threshold for listing at a Local level.
Technical/Research significance SHR criteria (e)	The building at 40-42 Flinders Street does not fulfil this criterion because of extensive modifications to the buildings' fabric. The former Taxi Club at 40-42 Flinders Street does not meet the threshold for listing at a State or Local level.
Rarity SHR criteria (f)	Despite extensive modifications, 40 Flinders Street is a rare surviving example of a purpose-designed piano warehouse. However, there is little to suggest that it would have been greatly different to other suburban warehouses constructed at the beginning of the twentieth century. The building at 40-42 Flinders Street is not considered to be rare example of a post-World War II licensed club as there is no evidence in the building fabric to allow interpretation of this use. However, its early, enduring and distinctive use as a venue frequented by members of the LGBTIQA+ community from circa 1963 to 2012 is considered to be rare. The former Taxi Club at 40-42 Flinders Street meets the threshold for listing at a State or Local level.
Representativeness SHR criteria (g)	The building at 40 Flinders Street may be representative of an early twentieth century warehouse, in this case one devoted to the sale of musical instruments. However, evidence of this use has been removed through ongoing alterations and refurbishment. Its façade is representative of the Victorian Free Classical style. The former Taxi Club at 40-42 Flinders Street does not meet this criterion at a State or Local level. Although the façade of 40 Flinders Street is stylistically representative, there are far better examples of the Victorian Free Classical style in Sydney.
Integrity	Exterior – moderate integrity

Heritage inventory sheet

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RECOMMENDATIONS	
Recommendations	• Manage 40-42 Flinders Street in accordance with Sydney LEP 2012 and Sydney DPC 2012. • Retain and conserve the front facade, form and external fabric of the building consistent with its contribution to the conservation area. • Alterations and additions may occur and are to retain the building's contribution to the conservation area. • Use the heritage exemption process to facilitate internal alterations and fitouts. • Conserve the LGBTIQA+ historic and social significance of the place through interpretation on site.

INFORMATION SOURCES				
Type	**Author/Client**	**Title**	**Year**	**Repository**
Written	TKD Architects	Former Taxi Club, 40-42 Flinders Street, Darlinghurst Heritage Study	2025	City of Sydney

AUTHOR OF THIS REPORT	
Name	**Date**
TKD Architects	October 2025

IMAGES	
Image Caption	Portion of photograph showing the upper sections of 40 Flinders Streety and to its left the parapet of 42 Flinders Street.

Image Year	1916	**Image author and Copyright Holder**	Hall & Co photograph; City of Sydney Archives Unique ID A-00040561

IMAGES	
Image Caption	Looking south along Flinders Street. 40 Flinders Street highlighted.

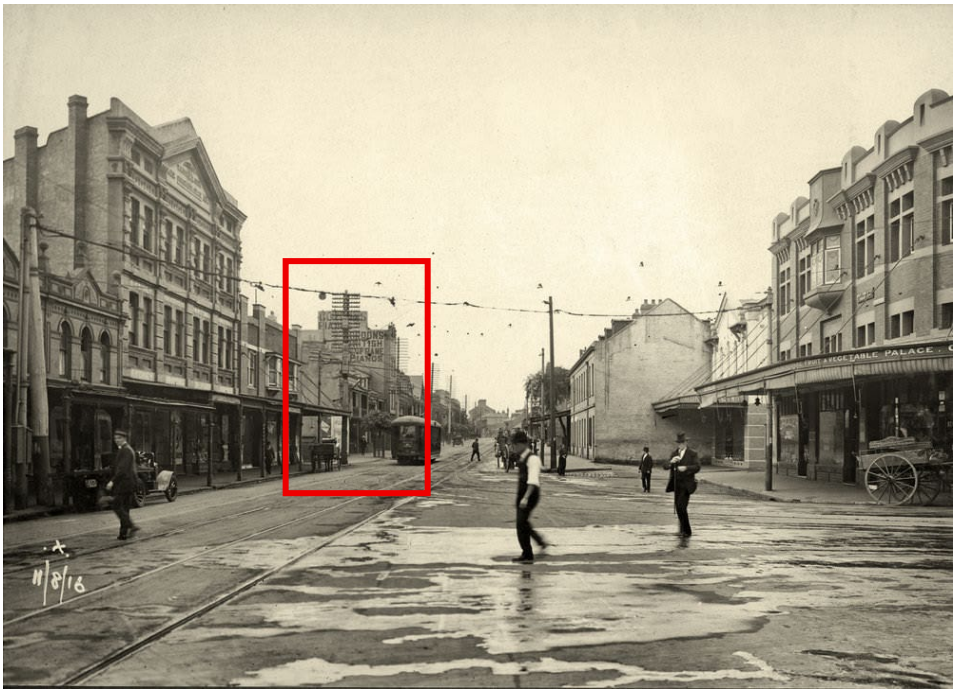

Image Year	1916	**Image author and Copyright Holder**	City of Sydney Archives Unique ID A-00040550

IMAGES	
Image Caption	Looking north-east towards Flinders Street from Short Street.

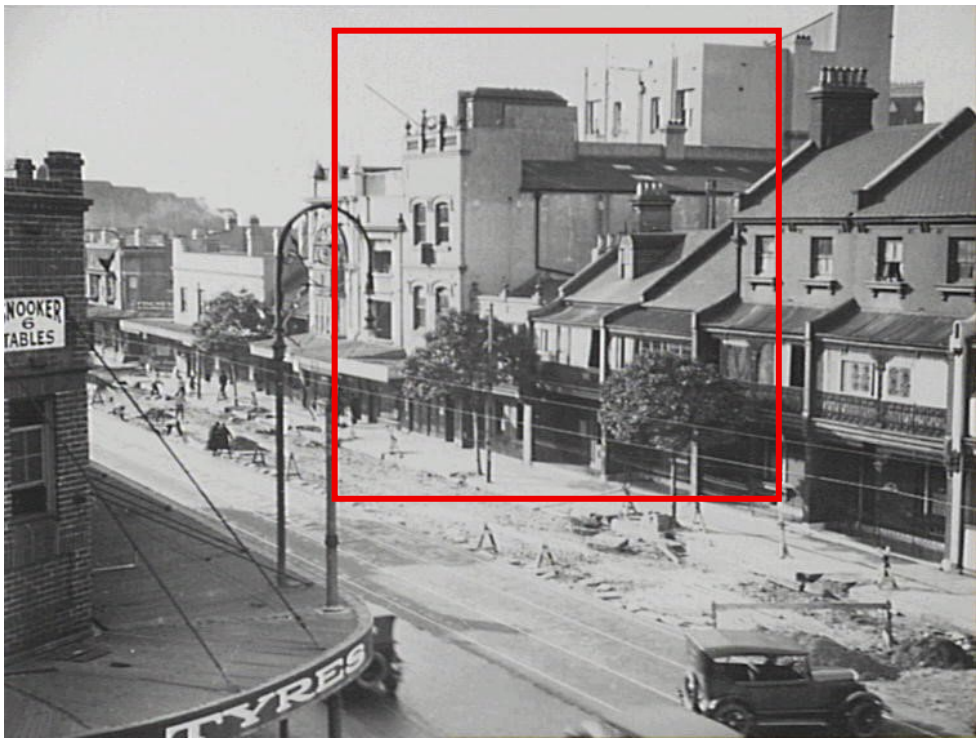

Image Year	1929	**Image author and Copyright Holder**	Herbert Small photograph; City of Sydney Archives Unique ID A-00054974.

IMAGES	
Image Caption	Looking north-east towards 40-42 Flinders Street, showing the 1950s alterations and additions to 42 Flinders Street.

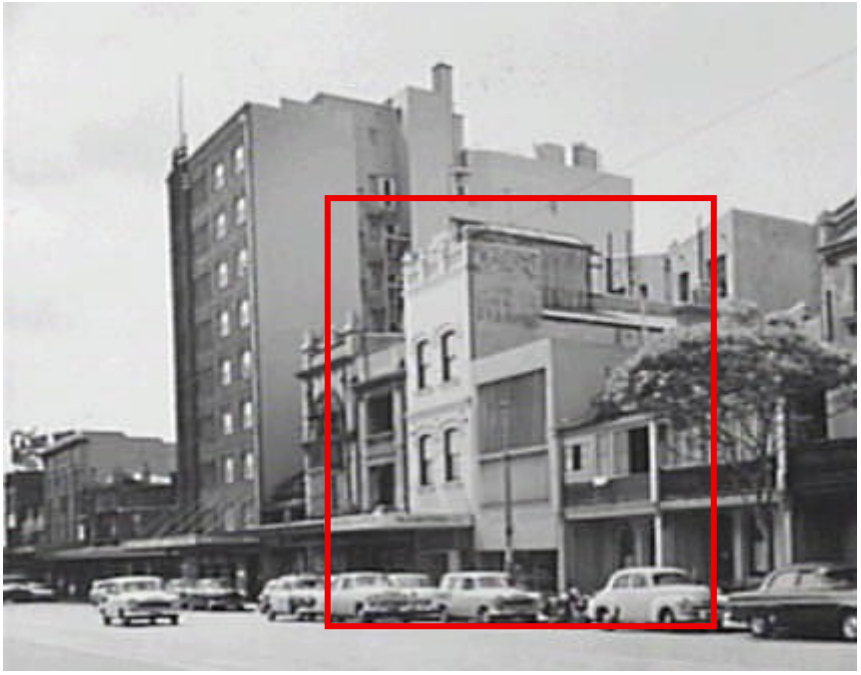

Image Year	1960	**Image author and Copyright Holder**	City of Sydney Archives Unique ID A-00012126

IMAGES			
Image Caption	40-42 Flinders Street		

Image Year	2012	**Image author and Copyright Holder**	City of Sydney Archives Mark Stevens Collection

IMAGES	
Image Caption	Looking south along Chisholm Street to the rear of 40-42 Flinders Street.

Image Year	2012	**Image author and Copyright Holder**	City of Sydney Archives Mark Stevens Collection.

IMAGES			
Image Caption	40-42 Flinders Street.		

Image Year	2025	**Image author and Copyright Holder**	TKD Architects

IMAGES			
Image Caption	Shopfronts, 40-42 Flinders Street		
Image Year	2025	**Image author and Copyright Holder**	TKD Architects

IMAGES			
Image Caption	Rear of 40-42 Flinders Street facing Chisholm Street.		
Image Year	2025	**Image author and Copyright Holder**	TKD Architects