



333 COLLINS STREET

The Past. The Present. The Future.



CONTENTS



The Past

3-6

- ~ History
- ~ Architecture

The Present

7-10

- ~ Interiors & Exteriors
- ~ Floor Plans
- ~ Lifts
- ~ Air Conditioning
- ~ Lighting & Power
- ~ Building Automation System
- ~ Security

The Future

11

The 333 Collins Street complex was completed in 1990, but within this complex stands a building that was constructed over 100 years before, during the land boom of the 1890's.

That building is the former Banking Chamber and entrance vestibule of the Commercial Bank of Australia.

These two spaces form the major entrance and foyer to the 333 Collins Street Complex. They were once the focal point of the Head Office of the Commercial Bank of Australia Ltd.



THE PAST

~HISTORY~

The Bank was established in 1866 and from that date the Bank's head office was located on this site. The 1880's was prosperous years for the Commercial Bank. Under the General Manager, Henry Gyles Turner, the Bank's deposit stock increased from 2 Million pounds in 1882 to nearly 12 million pounds in 1892 and it became the largest of the Associated Banks in Victoria.

In 1889, on the wave of this prosperity, a direct result of Australia's land and stock boom of the 1880's, the bank initiated a design competition for it's new head office. First prize was jointly awarded to Lloyd Tayler and Alfred Dunn, who were subsequently appointed architects for the new building. The foundation stone was laid in 1st July 1892 by the then chairman, Thomas Moubray. The contractor was James Moors of City Road, South Melbourne.

The Bank's move into it's new premises on 8 July 1893 coincided with it's darkest period in it's history. This period began with the crash in land and stock prices of 1891. The Bank had lent heavily to speculators and speculative businesses, to the degree that of their 12 million pound assets, only 2 million pounds were realisable. With this situation in mind, the Bank began to call in it's main economy. Many previously respectable businesses and individuals went into liquidation as a consequence. Worse still, certain of the more speculative banks began to suspend payments resulting in a general rush buy depositors to withdraw their funds from all the major banks.

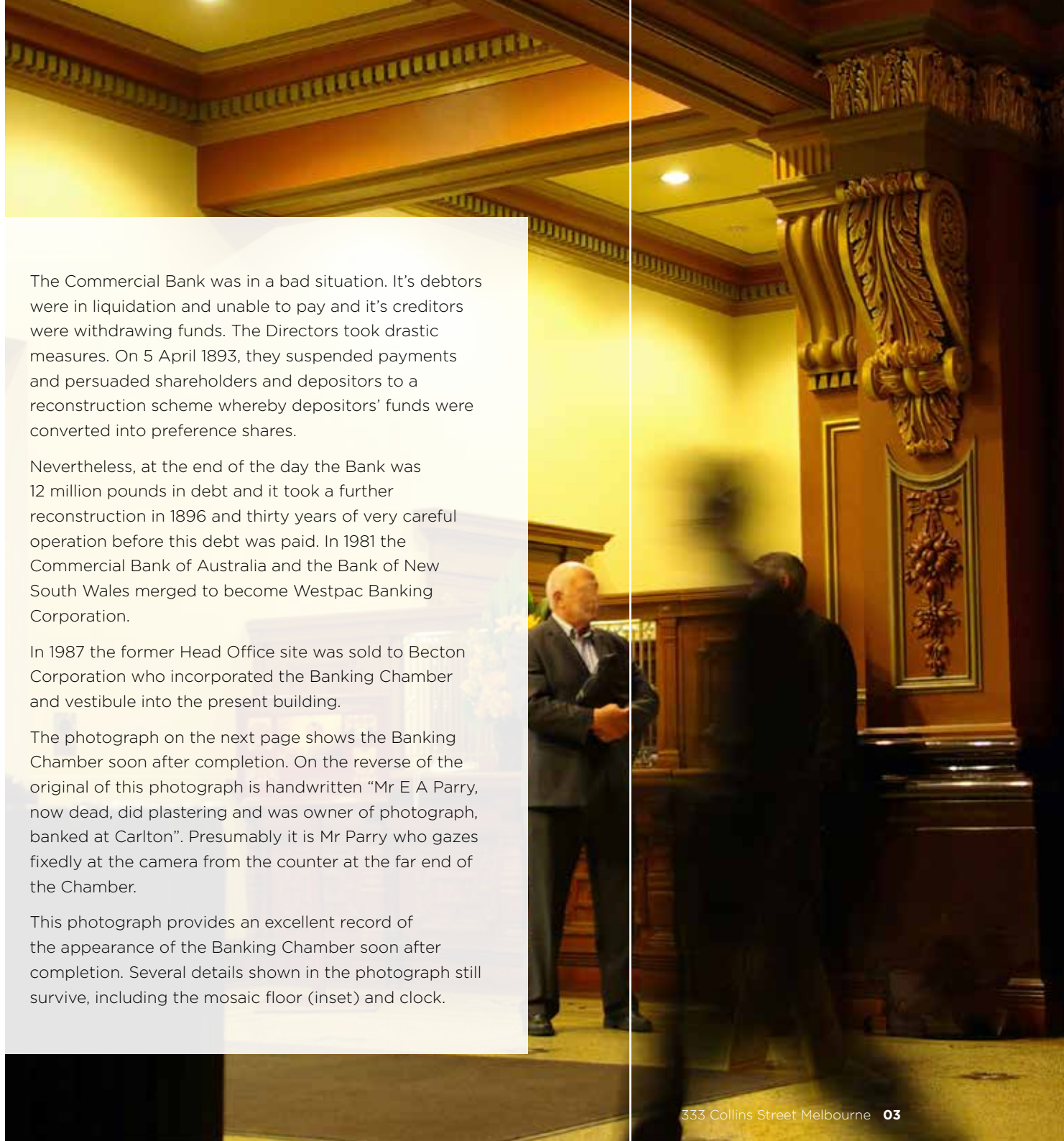
The Commercial Bank was in a bad situation. It's debtors were in liquidation and unable to pay and it's creditors were withdrawing funds. The Directors took drastic measures. On 5 April 1893, they suspended payments and persuaded shareholders and depositors to a reconstruction scheme whereby depositors' funds were converted into preference shares.

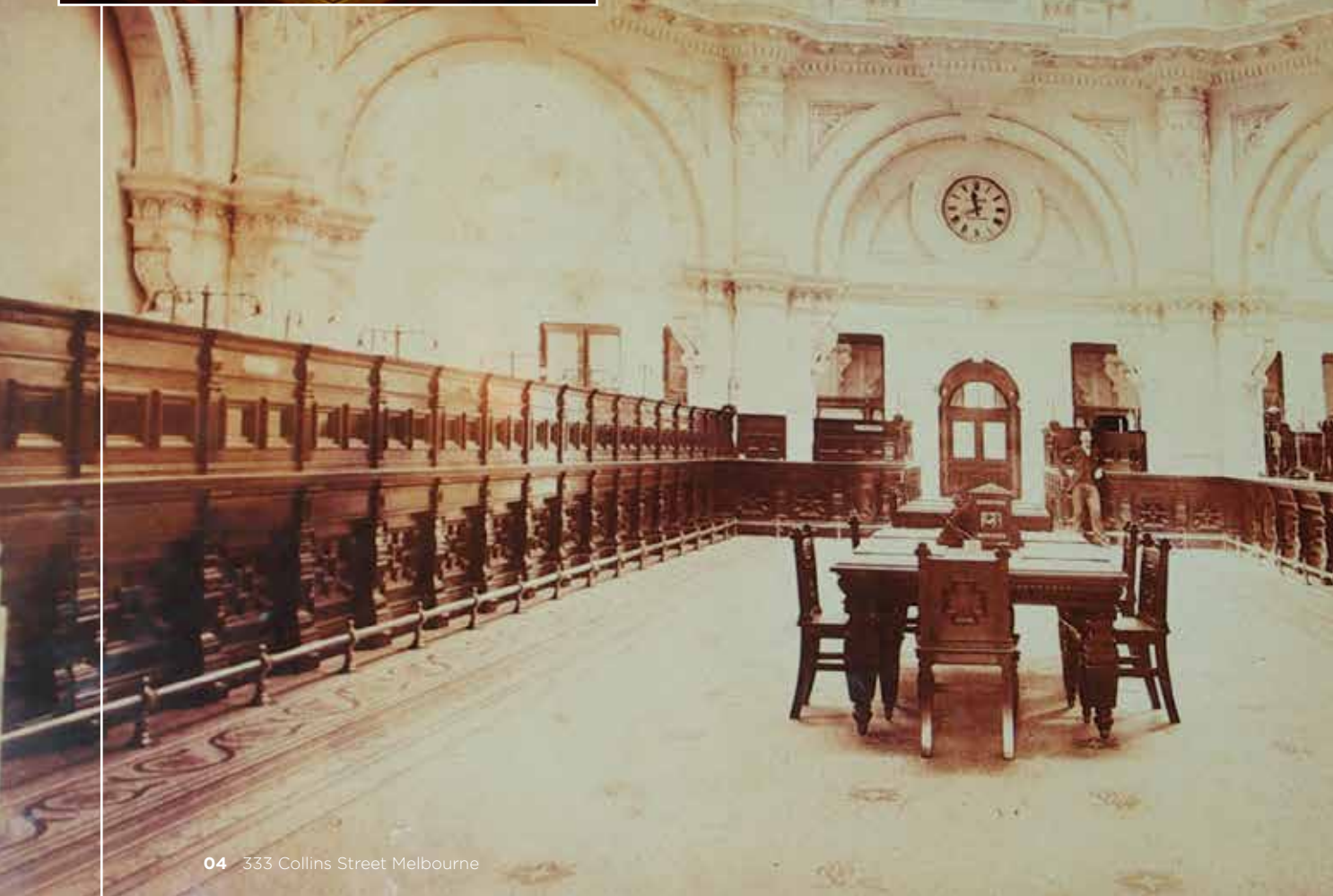
Nevertheless, at the end of the day the Bank was 12 million pounds in debt and it took a further reconstruction in 1896 and thirty years of very careful operation before this debt was paid. In 1981 the Commercial Bank of Australia and the Bank of New South Wales merged to become Westpac Banking Corporation.

In 1987 the former Head Office site was sold to Becton Corporation who incorporated the Banking Chamber and vestibule into the present building.

The photograph on the next page shows the Banking Chamber soon after completion. On the reverse of the original of this photograph is handwritten "Mr E A Parry, now dead, did plastering and was owner of photograph, banked at Carlton". Presumably it is Mr Parry who gazes fixedly at the camera from the counter at the far end of the Chamber.

This photograph provides an excellent record of the appearance of the Banking Chamber soon after completion. Several details shown in the photograph still survive, including the mosaic floor (inset) and clock.





Over time distinctive blackwood and walnut counters and screens were amended and gradually removed. Remnants of those fittings can still be viewed in the initial part of the twentieth century.

From a banking transaction point of view, the Banking Chamber was divided into two sections: the Ledger Section and the Teller's Section. The Ledger Section was concealed from view behind the panelled screen on the left hand side as show in the photograph. Customers presenting a cheque to be cashed, for instance, would first queue for service at the Ledger Section where the clerk would receive the cheque through one of the panels in the screen. The Clerk would mark the cheque certifying the amount shown and the correct signature.

The Customer could then present the cheque to a teller located on the right hand side of the photograph behind the counter.

The teller would retain the cheque and issue the necessary notes and coin. Deposits could be made at a Receiving teller.

Queuing obviously involved some amount of time in this process and the mosaic floor is worn in those areas where customers were required to wait for service. The Branch Manager's office and Accounts Sections were located beyond the Chamber through the far archway.

As well as functioning as a Branch and Head Office for the Commercial Bank of Australia, the building

accommodated the Cheque Clearing House for all banks operating in Victoria. The Clearing House was located at the rear of the site, however, it enjoyed independent access from the Collins Street vestibule via a partly submerged corridor. The corridor traversed the banking Chamber along the east wall (behind the Ledger screen) and is no longer in its original form, however, the entrance from the vestibule remains.

The photograph shows the Banking Chamber in its unpainted form.

Good building practice requires that plastered surfaces like those in the Chamber must be left unpainted until the plaster is fully dry. The drying process can take several months. Presumably the Chamber was painted in 1894.

The present colour scheme of the Chamber replicates the initial scheme and is based on extensive paint sampling of all of the interior surfaces.



~ARCHITECTURE~

Lloyd Tayler and Alfred Dunn and both distinguished among Victoria's era architects. Lloyd Tayler had previously designed the Head Office for the National Bank (also on Collins Street) and Parliament House, Adelaide. Alfred Dun, very much Tayler's junior, had recently completed the great Wesleyan Church in Hawthorn.

Taylor should in reality be regarded as the principal recipient of the first prize in the Head Office design competition as the concept of the domed Banking Chamber forming the centerpiece to the new bank stems from his design.

With great architectural rhetoric, Tayler justified his design as providing the Bank with a maximum of natural light and ventilation in its central activity area, nevertheless, the Domed Chamber and its vaulted entrance vestibule would have certainly appealed to the Bank's Directors, providing as it did the grandest bank in Melbourne.

It is said that Tayler had nurtured the idea of a vast domed banking Chamber for years, but had never had the opportunity to carry this idea into execution.

Certainly Tayler's competition entry demonstrates a very resolved design taking its precedents from the architecture of the Italian Baroque and Islam, most notably the Church of San Lorenzo in Turin by Guarino Guarini (1668-87) and the Great Mosque at Cordoba in Spain.



The interesting system of ribs continuously crossing the space and forming the dome vault, provide an element of movement in the design of the Chamber.

Such movement is rare in Victorian classicism which is usually dependent on the more static spaces of Renaissance and Roman architecture. This movement is further enhanced by the plastic nature of the space itself as it moves “beyond” to ancillary spaces to the north and south and ascends from a square space to an octagon, a spherical peak and finally the lantern, which is almost another space in itself.

The Bank’s functional requirements played a critical role in the planning of the Banking Chamber. Critical among these requirements was the need for good natural lighting and ventilation, given the constraint of the Chamber being surrounded on all sides by taller structures.

Taylor solved this problem by a glass lantern above the dome oculus and a series of clerestory windows. The effect was to bathe the Chamber in light.

In addition, the glazed panels of the lantern were designed to open, thereby allowing a through draft of air to the chamber.





In the years the followed, the Banking Chamber was repainted in the 1900's, 1929, 1940, 1956 and 1965.

A radical plan was instigated in 1939, when the Bank decided to demolish, rebuild and modernise.

A new austere building with art deco facade was constructed, but luckily the Domed Banking Chamber and Vestibule were retained.



THE PRESENT

In 1973, the Commercial Bank announced plans to demolish its old headquarters, including the Chamber, and to construct a large multi-story building on the site. There was a storm of controversy as Melburnians rallied to save the building on the site. The creation of the Historic Buildings Preservation Council in 1975 (now the Historic Buildings Council), allowed legislation to be passed to protect Victoria's architectural heritage. So now, as well as being listed on the Register of Historic Buildings, the Chamber is included in the Register of the National Estate and is classified by the National Trust.

In 1987, as part of asset rationalisation caused by the merger of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia and the Bank of New South Wales, Westpac sold the site to the Becton Corporation for the construction at 333 Collins Street of a twenty-nine storey tower including the Dome Chamber.

Texas based architect Brad Nelsen of Shepherd, Nelson & Wheeler and Bruce Trethowan of Robert Peck, von Hartle and Trethowan were commissioned to conceive a design that was to be in the context of the romantic character and urban fabric of Collins Street.

The entrance vestibule and arched portico are integral parts of the Domed Chamber and surviving remnants of the 17893 building. The historic Chamber was treated as the nucleus of the design and became the central feature of intersecting foyers, lobbies and galleries and of the external facade and roof treatment. Permits for the restoration of the Dome were sought from the Historic Buildings Council, with that boy setting rigorous standards for any work on the historic structure.

After extensive research, which included a lengthy investigation of the decoration and the interior colour schemes, it was decided to reproduce exactly the opulence of the original, and work began in 1988.

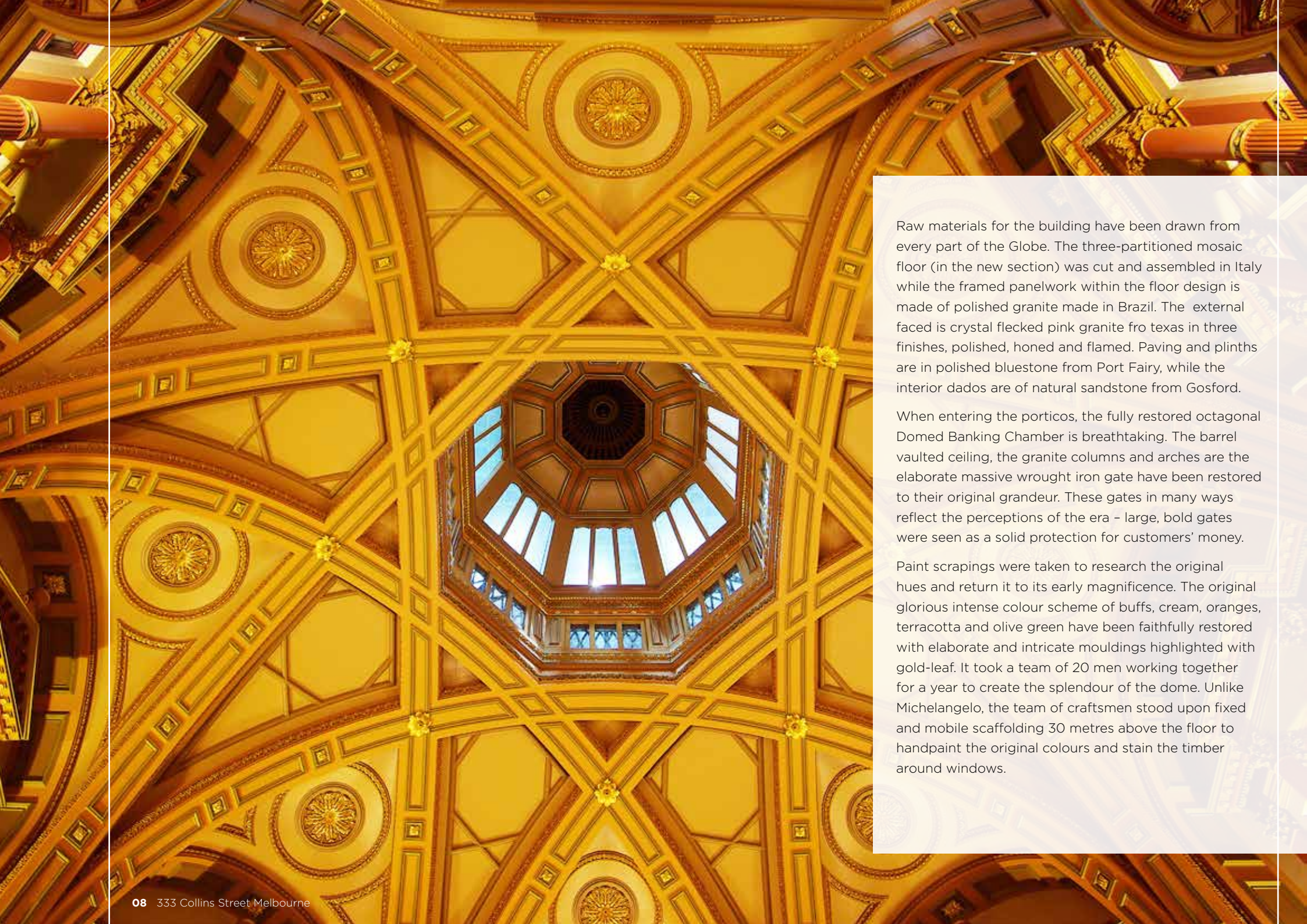
In 1990, after a fast-track building programme, 333 Collins Street was completed.

The project was amongst the most sophisticated developments undertaken in Melbourne.

A tower of twenty-nine floors, externally clad in richly ornamented exfoliated granite, rises above the restored Banking Chamber and Vestibule. Topped with a copper dome that sits twenty-nine floors above the original, it has become a distinctive feature of Melbourne's skyline.

The prominence of the original portico entrance on Collins Street, and the relationship between the street, the vestibule and the domed chamber, have been enhanced by the design of the new facade. The granite-clad edifice follows closely the proportions of Tayler's original 1893 design scheme and facade,

With is abstract classicism, the new facade sets the tone for the entire skyscraper tower and, at the same time, ties the Victorian scale of Collins Street frontage back to Tayler's original design. The low rise domed wing to the east of the central faced section also reflects the rhythm of the Victorian landscape. The new copper-clad dome atop the office tower (given its antique patine off-site), echoes the form of the famous dome below, and continues the Victorian tradition of domed architecture across the City of Melbourne.



Raw materials for the building have been drawn from every part of the Globe. The three-partitioned mosaic floor (in the new section) was cut and assembled in Italy while the framed panelwork within the floor design is made of polished granite made in Brazil. The external faced is crystal flecked pink granite from Texas in three finishes, polished, honed and flamed. Paving and plinths are in polished bluestone from Port Fairy, while the interior dados are of natural sandstone from Gosford.

When entering the porticos, the fully restored octagonal Domed Banking Chamber is breathtaking. The barrel vaulted ceiling, the granite columns and arches are the elaborate massive wrought iron gate have been restored to their original grandeur. These gates in many ways reflect the perceptions of the era – large, bold gates were seen as a solid protection for customers' money.

Paint scrapings were taken to research the original hues and return it to its early magnificence. The original glorious intense colour scheme of buffs, cream, oranges, terracotta and olive green have been faithfully restored with elaborate and intricate mouldings highlighted with gold-leaf. It took a team of 20 men working together for a year to create the splendour of the dome. Unlike Michelangelo, the team of craftsmen stood upon fixed and mobile scaffolding 30 metres above the floor to handpaint the original colours and stain the timber around windows.

Approximately 15 different colours of paint were used and the process of gold leaf applications cost in excess of \$100,00. The gold leaf was the final application and when the time came to apply it, work could only proceed when the conditions were absolutely right. It had to be perfectly calm, without a breath of wind. On any day working with the gold leaf, the chamber was literally sprinkled with fine gold dust and protective masks were needed.

The magnificent mosaic floor was also restored. Years of cracking and signs of ugly conduit tracking were removed and replaced with careful inlays of original tiles taken from the old administration building.

Its focal point is a gift from the past. The Domes Chamber is still recognised by the British Society of Architects as the finest structure of its kind in the world.

However this timeless design hides a multitude of user and environmentally friendly features.

~INTERIORS & EXTERIORS~

The exterior of 333 Collin Street is finished in natural stone, with copper domes and double glazed tinted glass. Finishes in the foyer include granite, sandstone and bluestone. Lift lobbies on each floor are finished in timbers and stone with plaster ceilings and special lighting. The floor covering throughout the office is quality Axminster carpet. Amenities are finished in granite and Tasmanian oak.

~FLOOR PLANS~

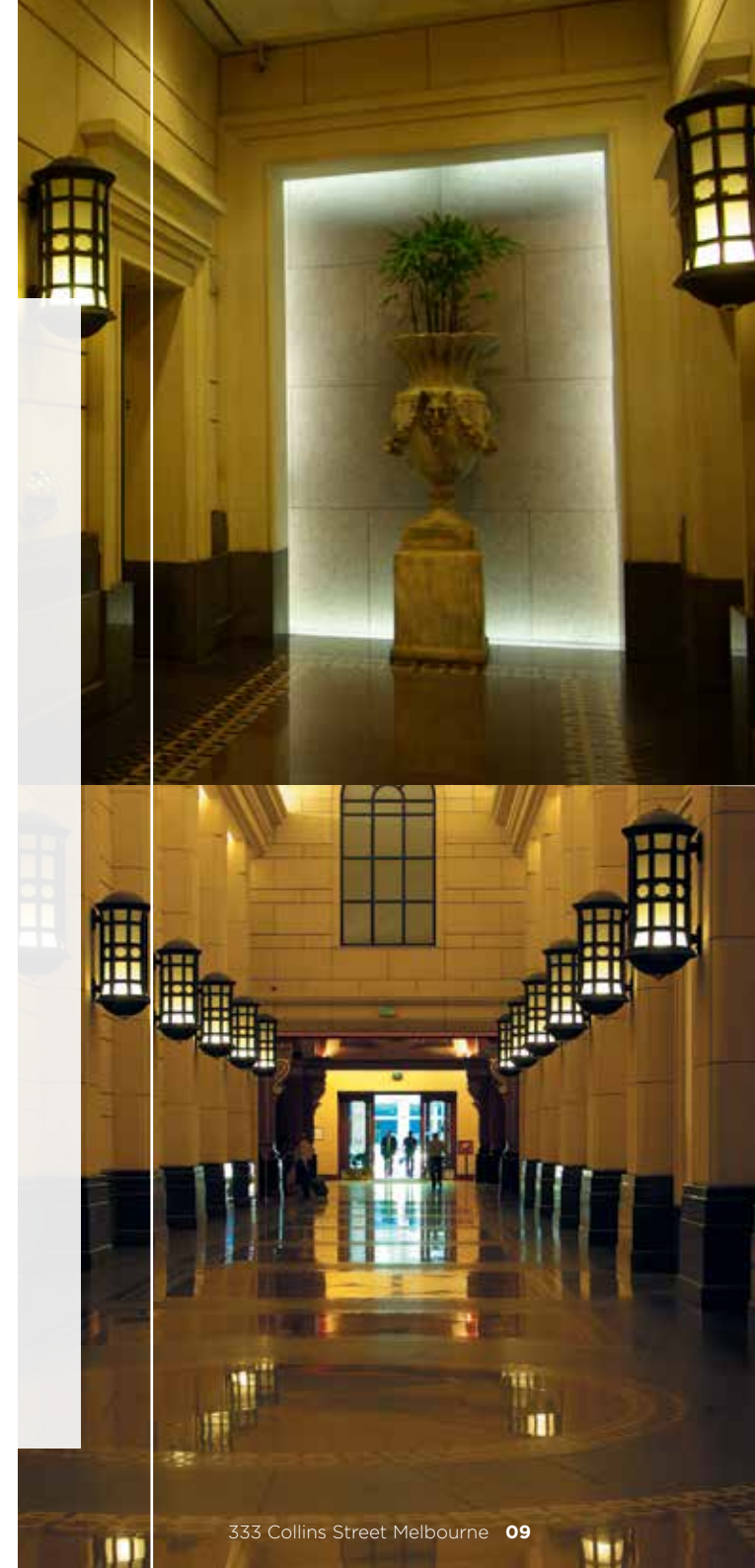
The core design is quite different from the traditional cruciform in most Melbourne buildings. Along with the flexible 500mm x 500mm planning module, the core design optimises space planning, resulting in higher occupancy efficiency and savings if tenancies are altered.

On typical floors, the dimension between the perimeter wall and service core is in excess of 11 metres. The floor to ceiling height of 2,850mm is 150mm more than the measurement in most other buildings. This height provides space for an access floor and, importantly, ensures a clear cabling zone is maintained throughout the access space.

On each floor there is a large, fully equipped kitchen. Many floors have two kitchens. Appliances include a refrigerator, dishwasher and microwave oven.

~LIFTS~

The 18 passenger lifts at 333 Collins Street perform as well as they look. Interruptions to journeys are minimised by the relatively short lift rises of no more than 10 floors. Average speed varies from 7.0 metres per second for the High Rise elevators, 4.0 metres per second for the Medium Rise elevators and 3.0 metres per second for the Low Rise elevators. Tenants and visitors are not inconvenienced by goods traffic - the two main goods lifts are accessible only at the loading bay and not at the ground floor.



~AIR CONDITIONING~

The air conditioning at 333 Collins Street provides both comfort and economy.

Comfort is enjoyed because of the heat handling capacity system and the numerous, well positioned zones on each floor and the efficient air filtering system.

For building constructed ten years ago or more, the typical heat handling capacity for lighting and for tenant equipment is less than 25 watts per square metre. The 50 watts per square metre at 333 Collins Street is at the highest level of buildings in the CBD.

~POWER~

The 333 Collins Street power supply of 60VA per square metre is amongst the highest available in any building in the CBD. Although this level of power exceeds projected requirements, an additional 50% capacity can be easily added.

The back up facility of the two 1.5 MVA generators offer stand-by power on the rare occasion of a power blackout. The stand-by power at 333 Collins Street will provide 50% of all requirements for power in the building and Uninterruptible Power Systems will ensure the continued operation of key building systems.

~LIGHTING~

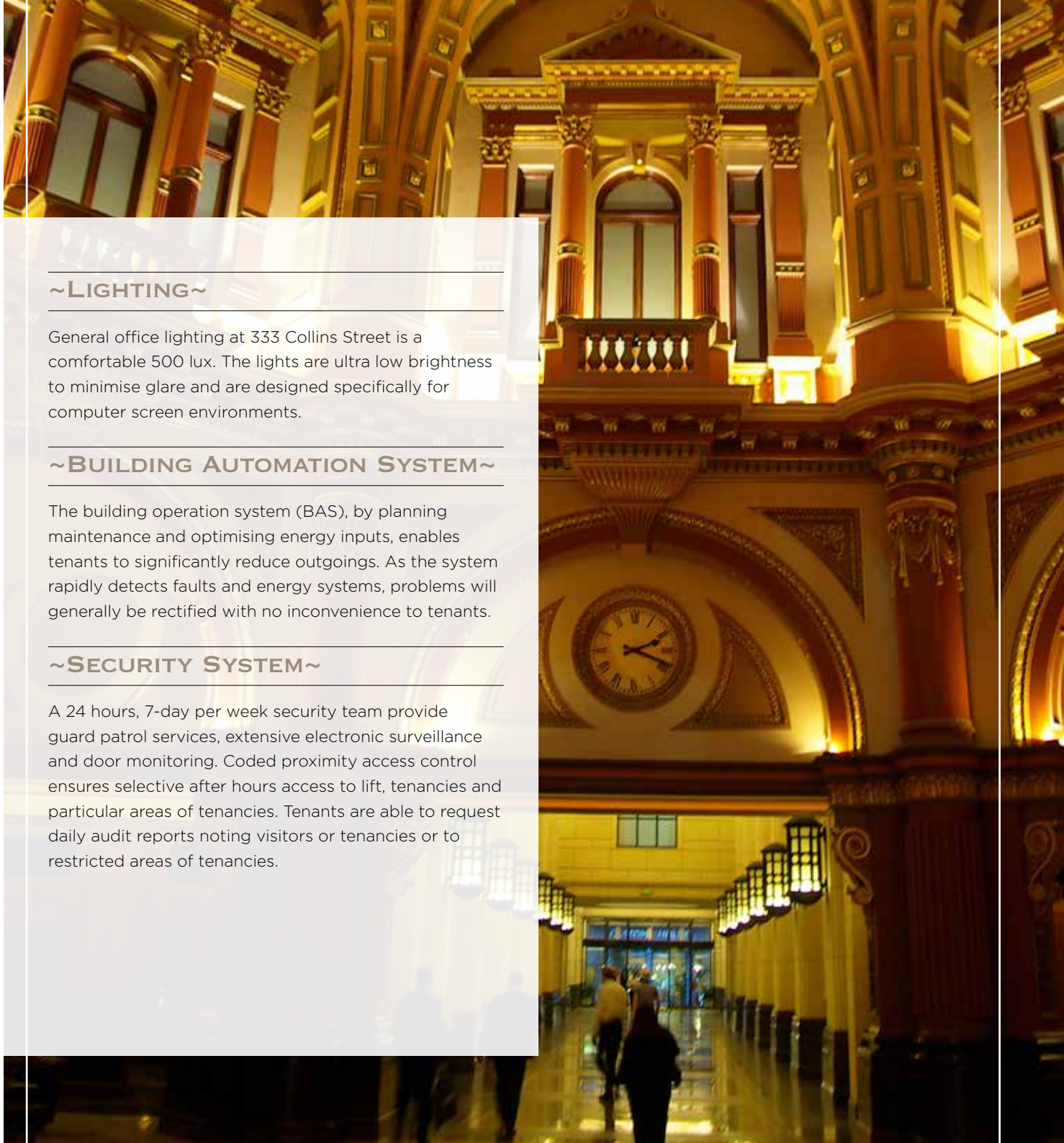
General office lighting at 333 Collins Street is a comfortable 500 lux. The lights are ultra low brightness to minimise glare and are designed specifically for computer screen environments.

~BUILDING AUTOMATION SYSTEM~

The building operation system (BAS), by planning maintenance and optimising energy inputs, enables tenants to significantly reduce outgoings. As the system rapidly detects faults and energy systems, problems will generally be rectified with no inconvenience to tenants.

~SECURITY SYSTEM~

A 24 hours, 7-day per week security team provide guard patrol services, extensive electronic surveillance and door monitoring. Coded proximity access control ensures selective after hours access to lift, tenancies and particular areas of tenancies. Tenants are able to request daily audit reports noting visitors or tenancies or to restricted areas of tenancies.



THE FUTURE

The Landmark Tower will continue to meet the demands placed on it by high profile blue chip commercial, legal, financial and corporate tenants in Melbourne.

It will continue to do so through the provision of high speed data services, telecommunications facilities, satellite receivers, mobile phone antennae and other ancillary information technology services.

The classical design of the new office tower, combined with its contemporary design features will ensure that 333 Collins Street remains at the forefront of premium buildings in Melbourne and will be a landmark in the CBD for generations to come.

For more details about 333 Collins Street, call the owner/manager, 333 Choice Properties on (03) 9204 3333.



