

SA Heritage Register

Place Submission form

South Australian
HERITAGE COUNCIL

South Australian Heritage Council

Submission on whether the entry of the Place **Former G.J. Coles & Company Adelaide Store** should be confirmed in the South Australian Heritage Register

A place is eligible for entry in the Heritage Register if it meets one or more of the criteria in Section 16(1) of the *Heritage Places Act 1993* (Act). Using the table below, please explain why you believe the place should or should not be entered into the Register, using the said criteria. The South Australian Heritage Council invites your submission regarding the entry of this place. For help in making a submission, please refer to the Guidelines for Interpreting State Heritage Criteria, available online: [Guidelines-for-Interpreting-State-Heritage-Criteria-2024.pdf](#)

Criteria

Criteria under the <i>Heritage Places Act</i> 1993, section 16(1)	Provide evidence or other information to support your submission
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<p>a) it demonstrates important aspects of the evolution or pattern of the State's history</p>	<p>The evolution of retail architecture is very well explored in the report. What I wish to highlight is the importance of the Coles building in the absence of many others, and continued demolition of lesser examples.</p> <p>The loss of the Harris Scarfe buildings created great angst in the broader community, as they sensed a strong loss of South Australian history. The resumption of the brand's trading in new premises did not save them, their new city store closed soon after.</p> <p>Thus the Coles building remains one of very few purpose built retail edifices in the city, on its premier retail strip, Rundle Mall.</p> <p>The building is a reminder of the strength and primacy of city retailing and, in particular, large format stores. Post WW2 the expanse of suburbia, increasing levels of car ownership, and population growth led to the development of large suburban shopping centres, centrally owned, and hosting newer large format stores which rarely addressed their exterior surrounds. Investment in retail in the city suffered for many decades thereafter.</p> <p>In historical terms, the Coles building represents a highlight of the peak trading decades for city retailing. It was designed between the wars, survived and thrived after, including through the explosion of suburban retailing, and survived the conversion of Rundle Street into Rundle Mall, before closing a decade later.</p> <p>Unlike other very few purpose built examples in the city, it continues to have a strong retail presence dominating its ground floor activity. It remains prominent, in very good condition, and is a highlight in architectural terms, retaining its original form, colour and configuration when so many other Rundle Mall facades have been substantially altered.</p> <p>Notably, the majority of other listed large format retail buildings do not exist on Rundle Mall. The Mall strongly defines the key retail precinct in Adelaide, and other listed sites risk being perceived as non-retail premises in their current context, and building use, due to their dislocation from the Mall and substantial conversions into other uses.</p> <p>Conversely, the Coles building's location lends itself to forever maintaining a retail use at ground level, enabling its larger format retail use to be easily interpreted in the longer term.</p> <p>In terms of form, the building is a standout example of progressive architecture in its day. It represents the use of world-leading retail architecture (gleaned by Harry Norris via his trips to the USA) and Coles' confidence in the South Australian market. The report records the advent of competitors and Coles response in purchasing adjacent land for a record price and demolishing the substantial building on it despite it being barely 12 years old. This further demonstrates the power and profitability of city retailing in the era, a part of our state's history that is at significant risk of loss.</p> <p>The exterior detailing unifies the facade, confirming its use as a single owner and occupier. This is another feature of 20th century retailing that is increasingly rare, and not evident elsewhere in Rundle Mall, save for the former David Jones building which has been substantially altered.</p>
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<p>b) it has rare, uncommon or endangered qualities that are of cultural significance</p>	<p>Harris Norris's use of progressive architectural style in the late 30's is evident in almost every aspect of the Coles building, particularly its surviving elements.</p> <p>The use of a unified facade, with streamlined horizontal banding, prefinished glazed brick facade, curved corner, continuous ribbon glazing to the southern facade, projecting alternate coloured "shade" to the upper facade, and relative lack of ornamentation marked a radical and new approach to architecture in general in South Australia, and in retail architecture in particular.</p> <p>Designed to compete with the newly completed Art Deco store to its west, and needing to stand out from the richly decorated Adelaide Arcade and slightly less so Regents Arcade buildings to the south, Harry Norris's use of stripped back decoration, glazed exterior, curved corner with neon signage and floating ribbon glazing created a huge contrast.</p> <p>This was absolutely deliberate. Coles wanted to appeal to the modern shopper, and be noticed in what was an extremely busy and architecturally cluttered Rundle Street.</p> <p>It was the first such design in the State. It is one of the very earliest uses of ribbon glazing and suspended facades in the State. It is a very rare example of a large building entirely clad in glazed block, a product Wunderlich developed after being one of the few Australian manufactures to attend the 1925 World Exposition in Paris, largely recognised as the birth of the Art Deco style which swept the world between the wars.</p>
<p>c) it may yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the State's history, including its natural history</p>	

<p>d) it is an outstanding representative of a particular class of places of cultural significance</p>	
<p>e) it demonstrates a high degree of creative, aesthetic or technical accomplishment or is an outstanding representative of particular construction techniques or design characteristics</p>	<p>Many of the features written above indicate a high degree of design Anna technical expertise.</p> <p>The building in its total external form reorients and excellent example of a large format single trader owner occupier building.</p> <p>It also exhibits excellent technical design and workmanship skill in the use and installation of the glazed block facade, incorporating curved blocks, rebates, reveals, cantilevers and joints all expertly installed.</p> <p>The same level of diligence is exhibitors in the application of the steel framed windows, with the southern "ribbon" glazing being the most expansive in its era, and for many years thereafter. They were a standout feature of the building's design, and one of Adelaide's very early examples, if not the earliest, of a curtain wall suspended from cantilevered concrete slab floors, with heavy masonry appearing to float over delicate continuous glazing bands. Quite remarkable in its day. The internally offset columns that permitted this solution are evident through the glazing and enable the story of this innovation to be told through external observation on, for example, a hosted walking tour. This method of construction was widely adopted and is now the predominant contemporary form of construction.</p> <p>The colour of the exterior of the building is the original colour, untouched and remarkably undamaged. This is extremely rare for a building of its age.</p> <p>The curved corner, whilst not unique, is rare and in excellent condition. I would have created the appearance of an extremely modern building when constructed, and a standout from its nearby computers. This story is still able to be told by comparing and contrasting the Coles facade with the nearby Regent and Adelaide arcade facades. As a collective, the three facades exhibit a range of design and technical achievement that reflect the very best of their eras, and the progressive nature of the Coles design.</p> <p>Hidden away is the structure of the building, which was also class-leading in the clear column-free spans it permitted, the curtain walling to the south, and the cantilevered awning (now reclad).</p>

f) it has strong cultural or spiritual associations for the community or a group within it	
(g) it has a special association with the life or work of a person or organisation or an event of historical importance	

Declaration

The South Australian Heritage Council is committed to transparency in relation to the listing process and wishes to enhance public confidence in the nomination, listing and decision-making process. The Council's policy is to make nominations for State heritage listing and submissions on provisional entries publicly available via webpage or to interested parties. The Council will adhere to the Privacy Principles and your name and personal details will not be released unless authorised or required under the Privacy Principles.

I **do / I do not** want my personal details to be released when this nomination / submission is published on the Department for Environment and Water's webpage, noting the above requirements.

I, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] _____

wish to make a written representation regarding the provisional entry of **Former G.J. Coles & Company Adelaide Store**. The information I have provided is correct to my knowledge.

Yes, I **support** the confirmation of this provisional entry.

I do wish to appear personally before the Council to make oral representations.



Signature:

Date: 25/02/2026

Please attach any relevant documents and be aware that a heritage officer may contact you to discuss your submission.

Please provide your contact details here:

Phone: [Redacted]

Email: [Redacted]

Address: [Redacted]

This form must be received by 5pm on **22 March 2026**.

Please return completed submission form to the
Board and Policy Officer, South Australian Heritage Council
Via email: **DEWHeritage@sa.gov.au**
Or via post: **GPO Box 1047, Adelaide SA 5001**