



## Heritage



### Desmond Chambers

#### Key details

**Addresses** At 309 Adelaide Street, Brisbane City, Queensland 4000

**Type of place** Warehouse

<b>Period</b>	Federation 1890-1914
<b>Style</b>	Free Style
<b>Lot plan</b>	L1_RP910; L2_RP886
<b>Key dates</b>	Local Heritage Place Since — 30 October 2000 Date of Information — April 2011
<b>Construction</b>	Walls: Face brick
<b>People/associations</b>	Atkinson and McLay (Architect); Henry Roberts (Builder)

Desmond Chambers was constructed in 1912-13 for the Desmond Trust, to a design by eminent architectural firm Atkinson and McLay. This substantial brick 'warehouse' of five storeys and basement was built during a boom period in Brisbane's building industry in the early twentieth century. The building was leased to a variety of tenants, from small business owners to large government departments, and served as the Brisbane recruiting office in World War 2.

## History

Erected in 1912-13 as a 'warehouse' for the Desmond Trust, this substantial brick building of five storeys and a basement is illustrative of the wave of new building activity in the Brisbane central business district during the first decade and a half of the twentieth century. Its construction just prior to the onset of the Great War 1914-18 reflected the buoyant Queensland agricultural-based economy of the time.

The architects were Atkinson and McLay of Creek St, and the contractor, master builder Henry Roberts of Kelvin Grove.

The new building featured electric passenger and good lifts, strong rooms on each floor and boasted large rooms with free electric light for its tenants. Known from the outset as Desmond Chambers, these elegant, modern new business premises attracted an eclectic mix of commercial and government clients. When first tenanted, the two upper floors were occupied almost exclusively by wool buyers; the basement by a wine & spirits merchant; the Commonwealth Electoral Office was situated on the ground floor; and the Commonwealth Pensions and Government Maternity allowance offices on the second floor, along with an exporter and a dairy utensils company; while on the first floor was the office of the Brisbane agents for Tobler's chocolates.

About September 1941, as war in the Pacific loomed, an Australian Infantry Forces Recruiting Depot was established at Desmond Chambers. The Rejected Volunteers Association of Australia also occupied an office in this building.

Externally the building remains highly intact, with its front elevation of alternating bands of face brickwork and cement render, and projecting curved centre bay, although the street-level shop fronts have been modified. On the north end of the front parapet is the faint lettering 'AD', and at the south end the numerals '1913'.

(From Walking Tours, 'Brisbane Commercial Heritage 1900-1940' (Brisbane: Brisbane History Group, 2002)

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**Note:** This information has been prepared on the basis of evidence available at the time including an external examination of the building. The statement of significance is a summary of the most culturally important aspects of the property based on the available evidence, and may be re-assessed if further information becomes available. The purpose of this information is to provide an informed evaluation for heritage registration and information. This does not negate the necessity for a thorough conservation study by a qualified practitioner, before any action is taken which may affect its heritage significance.

prepared by — Brisbane City Council (page revised March 2023)



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