South East CBD/ ‘Paris End’

Over the past 50 years, the eastern end of the CBD around Collins and Little Collins streets has lost many lanes and important heritage landscapes due to large-scale office developments such as Collins Place and the Hyatt Hotel. However, a number of valuable laneways survive, mainly in clusters off leafy Lt. Collins close to the “Paris end” as well as the intersection of Bourke and Russell Streets.

Some of these lanes are dominated by private club buildings, like Ridgway Place, with the women only Lyceum Club opposite the Melbourne Club’s iconic high garden wall. These lanes contain both historic and contemporary architecture, such as Monaco House and the Little Hero Apartments.

A number of these lanes are now dominated by the blank concrete walls of adjacent skyscrapers. The lanes identified below retain a human scale, historic character and offer respite from the busy main streets in the area. A number of these lanes could be included in a revised HO504.
1. Ridgeway Place (and Bramban lane) (Class 3)
This lane consists of an entrance off Little Collins Street edged on one side by the Melbourne Club garden wall, and on the other by two Edwardian buildings housing restaurants (both D graded). Ridgway Place contains an eclectic mix of architecture and uses, with the cutting edge Deconstructivist Monaco House, a rare CBD Victorian era terrace house (D graded) and the striking 1950’s modernist Lyceum Club (D graded) and borrowed views of the enormous Plane tree in the Melbourne Club courtyard making up the lanescape. The lane surface is modern with bluestone guttering.
2. Club Lane and McGrath Place (Class 3)

Following the imposing rear wall of the Melbourne Club gardens west along Little Collins Street brings you to Club Lane. Here the garden wall turns south and forms the eastern abutting wall of Club Lane. This lanescape is characterised by a built fabric of brick, stone and corrugated iron. The western side of this short lane consists of an impressive Edwardian Warehouse with red brick walls original heritage windows. The lane surface is concrete with modern bluestone kerbing.

McGrath Place (next page) runs along the western side of the same Edwardian Baroque warehouse which is bounded by Club Lane to the east. A number of small-scale shops with entrances onto the lane exhibit interesting character. Two small brick buildings have been incorporated into the rear of the Edwardian warehouse, which contains design studios, adding to the rich texture of this authentic lanescape. Original windows within the rear of the Art Deco ‘Centenary Hall’ overlook McGrath Place.
3. George Parade (Class 2)

Running between Flinders Lane and Collins St., George Parade rises up the hill from Flinders Lane towards Collins Street. Several buildings within this lanescape were lost in the 1980’s when 101 Collins St was constructed leaving a blank wall. This is a prime example of what a revised laneway policy would assist the City of Melbourne to avoid in the future.

Despite this loss, important character elements remain, including neo-Gothic, art deco and Victorian era windows overlooking the lane and brick structures flanking the Collins St. entrance. Within the lane a small Victorian era shop front and a unique Art Deco substation (D-graded), showing wonderful attention to detail can be found. Bluestone guttering lines this lane.
4. Coromandel Place (Class 3)
Unfortunately Coromandel Place’s heritage character was recently eroded when a brick building and its laneway abutting walls were demolished for modern apartments. The northern and western frontage of the lane retain a great deal of character, with a row of Edwardian warehouses converted to apartments (none of which have any heritage grading), and the backs of historic Bourke St buildings. The lane surface is concrete, but bluestone guttering appears along the sides and parts of the centre channel.
5. Melbourne Place (Class 2)

Melbourne Place forms a ‘D’-shaped lane behind Russell St and contains the Kelvin Club (1871, and is currently under consideration for heritage protection in Amendment C186) which lends this lane a unique atmosphere. The far side of the lane is dominated by the rear and sides of the 1920’s ‘Theosophical Society’ building (D-graded).
6. Baptist Place and Athenaeum Place (Class 3)

These two lanes run between sections of the neo-gothic Victoria Hotel (not currently protected) exposing a rich variety of fabrics, signs, cast iron pipework and Victorian era decoration. A rich architectural story is visible within these lanes, which exhibit the layers of additions and alterations to the hotel over a broad sweep of time. Baptist Place (next page) also provides access to the rear of a number of Heritage listed Collins St. buildings, and an entrance the Baptist Church community outreach and cafe. These may be two of the least traversed laneways in Melbourne, but are also some of its more interesting, historically speaking, and both have great potential for future reuse and adaptation.
7. Portland Lane (Class 3)

Portland Lane is an extensive bluestone laneway forming a ‘T’-shape to the rear of the Portland Hotel and the un-graded Cyclorama building, the lane previously ran into Russell Place via an empty lot before a modern apartment building was constructed. The Portland Hotel has a plain and altered front façade but a very interesting rear façade while the Cyclorama building has several balconies looking into the laneway. Sections of its surface are original bluestone while other sections have been re-laid.
8. Russell Place and Donaldson Lane (Class 3)

Russell Place contains a large Edwardian warehouse, a 1960’s council building to the south, an Art Deco bank tower (Victorian Heritage Register listed) and a Victorian era shop (D-graded) to the north. The lanescaphe is dominated on its western side by a large car park but its eastern side reveals an Edwardian building, a 1930’s concrete substation, and the Modern Little Hero Apartments. These all add a rich variety to the built fabric and variety of ages in the lanescaphe, contributing a human scale to the surrounding precinct. The paving is uneven concrete, with modern bluestone kerbing.

Nearby Donaldson Lane is a lanescaphe consisting of the backs of inter-war and Victorian era buildings along Bourke Street.
9. Private lane behind Le Louvre. (not mentioned in current policy)

While much of the debate about a proposed tower at 80 Collins St. has focused on its response to the broader Collins St. precinct, this very historic bluestone laneway was barely mentioned, nor was the rustic rear of the iconic ‘Le Louvre’, which is arguably the most historically intact part of this well known Melbourne building. Although its character is somewhat compromised by the lack of a northern building, (likely demolished for Nauru House’s plaza) the small lane is interesting and intact in an area which has lost much of its original small scale feel, and should therefore be retained.