

## City Mutual Life Assurance Building

Address 60-66 Hunter Street, Sydney, NSW, 2000

Practice Emil Sodersten

Designed 1935 Completed 1936

History & Description The City Mutual Life Assurance Building addresses the corner of Bligh & Hunters Streets opposite Richard Johnson Square. The steel framed 11 storey building (excluding basement & tower levels) is an excellent example of the Art Deco style of architecture with its vertical emphasis, stepped skyline, use of zig-zag or pleated window treatment, monumental entry & use of striking materials. The upper floors facing the streets are clad with Wondabyne sandstone above a two storey base-course of polished red granite. Bronze framed windows and spandrel panels feature at ground & first floor level, with steel casement windows above. The main facades are modelled by the projecting shapes of the windows and the skilful setbacks of the corner tower. Above the main entry is a bas-relief by the noted sculptor Rayner Hoff in black granite. The entry also features bronze doors & handrails. Internally the main features include a fine entry hall with marble walls, floor & stair, & sliding bronze doors which lead to the splendid, double-height former Assurance Chamber set diagonally through the building & surrounded with offices on all sides. This chamber features fine & rare scagliola on walls & columns as well as marble & bronze detailing.

The building was technically advanced for the time being the first privately owned building in Australia to have ducted air conditioning & the first in Sydney to have reliable internal lifts & underground parking.

Emil Sodersten is a notable Australian early modernist architect & is recognised as one of the key practitioners of the Art Deco style in Australia & this is his most notable work.

Statement of Significance

The City Mutual Life Assurance Building is an excellent example of Art Deco style of architecture in Australia applied to an office building. It demonstrates outstanding creative accomplishment through its use of Art Deco motifs. It demonstrates outstanding technical achievement in being the first privately owned building in Australia to have ducted air conditioning & the first in Sydney to have reliable internal lifts & underground parking. The building is recognised as the finest achievement in this style by the notable Australian early modernist architect Emil Sodersten. The bas reliefs by Rayner Hoff are of high artistic achievement & are considered to be one of the finest early twentieth century Australian examples of the integration of sculpture into commercial building.

Criteria Applicable

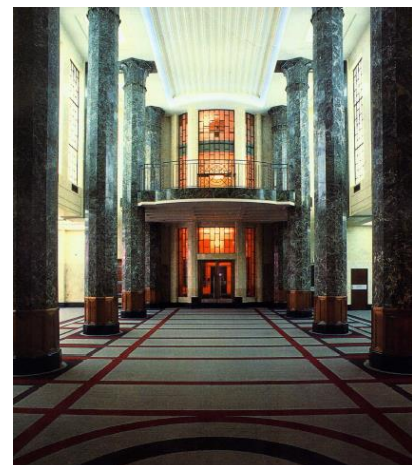
**N1.** Significant heritage value in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or period of design  
**N5.** Having a special association with the life or works of an architect of significant importance in our history



Bligh and Hunter Street facades (Source: *Building*, October 1936, p. 28)



Main Entrance (Source: *Building*, October 1936, p.30)



Assurance Chamber 1992, after removal of the later mezzanine (Source: Tanner Architects)