

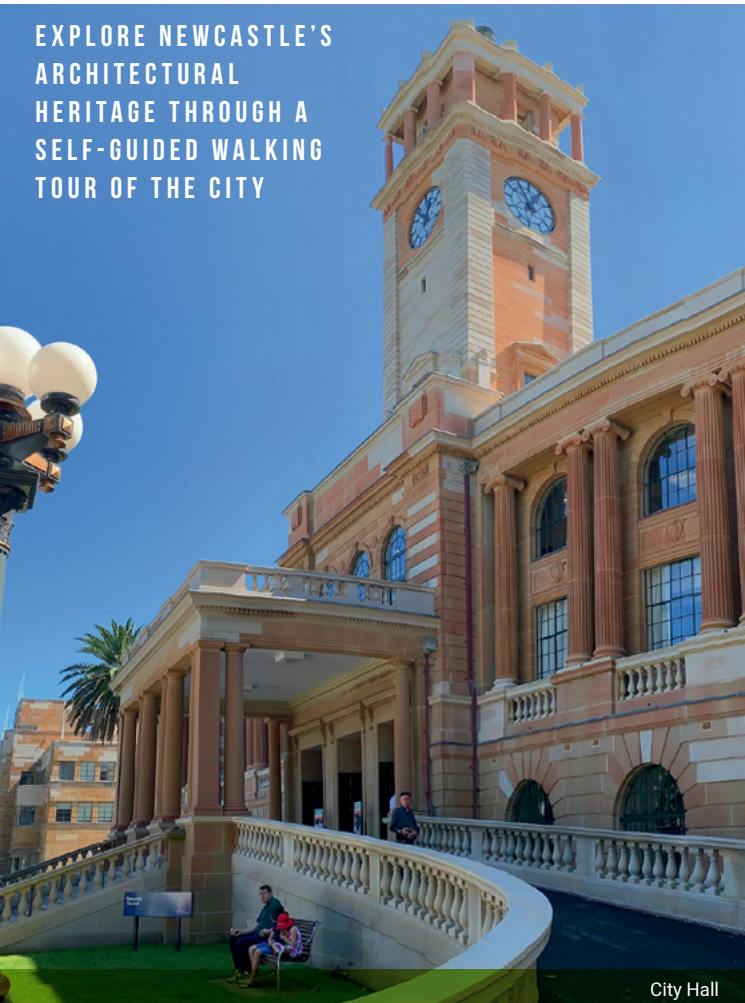
# WALKING TRAIL



Easy  
1hr 30mins / 2.2km

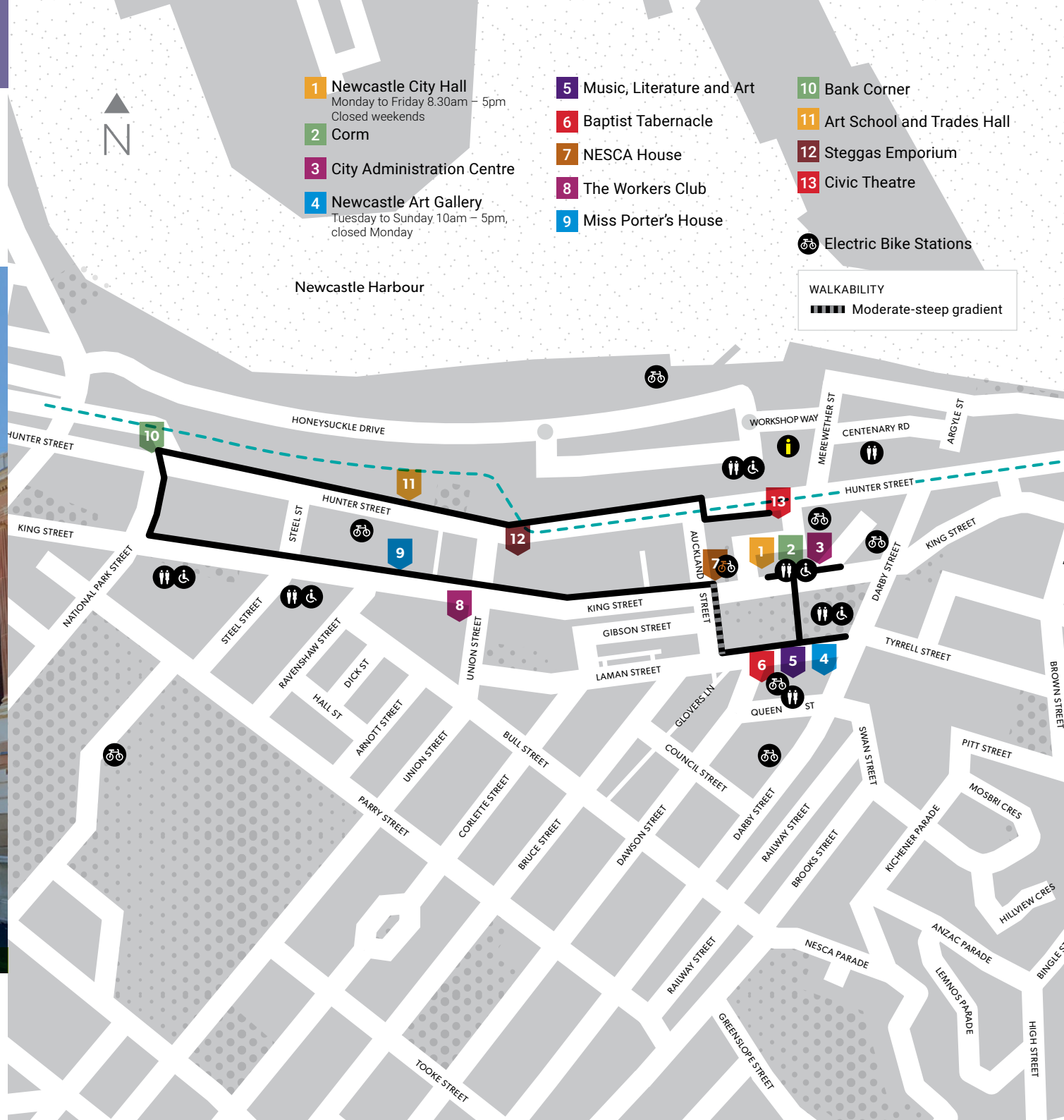
# NEWCASTLE ARCHITECTURE

EXPLORE NEWCASTLE'S  
ARCHITECTURAL  
HERITAGE THROUGH A  
SELF-GUIDED WALKING  
TOUR OF THE CITY



City Hall

**NEWCASTLE**  
AUSTRALIA



# NEWCASTLE ARCHITECTURE

The architecture of Newcastle showcases a rich diversity of styles that reflect the city's prosperity and growth throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. On this tour you'll explore buildings that have acted as cultural, political and economic icons for the people of Newcastle, and discover designs created by architects of local, national and international significance.

The walking tour begins at City Hall, which has been at the centre of Newcastle's cultural and political life since it was completed in 1929, and ends after coming almost full circle to the nearby Civic Theatre, Newcastle's premier live theatre venue and one of the last great remaining examples of 'picture palace' architecture in the state.

For more self guided walking tours, visit [www.visitnewcastle.com.au](http://www.visitnewcastle.com.au) or visit the Newcastle Visitor Information Centre located at Museum Park, Honeysuckle.

**Newcastle City Hall**  
290 King Street, Newcastle  
Monday to Friday 8.30 am – 5pm  
closed public holidays  
[newcastlecityhall.com.au](http://newcastlecityhall.com.au)

**Newcastle Art Gallery**  
Laman Street, Cooks Hill  
Tuesday to Sunday 10am – 5pm  
open Monday during school holidays  
[nag.org.au](http://nag.org.au)

**Newcastle Region Library**  
Ground Floor, 15 Laman Street, Newcastle  
Monday to Friday 9.30am – 8pm  
Saturday 9.30am – 2pm  
[newcastle.nsw.gov.au/services/newcastle\\_library](http://newcastle.nsw.gov.au/services/newcastle_library)



## 1 NEWCASTLE CITY HALL

Known for its golden Sydney sandstone façade, towering three-metre diameter clock and grand Roman Doric and Ionic columns, City Hall is a Newcastle landmark.

The three-storey State Heritage-listed building, designed by acclaimed architect Henry Eli White, was completed in 1929 and today represents a fine example of Inter-War Academic Classical style.

The building features an 844-seat concert hall, dining room and servery, as well as office and function spaces.

It was home to City of Newcastle until 1977 when staff moved to the purpose-built City Administration Centre, known as the Roundhouse. City Hall continued to house the Council Chambers and the Lord Mayor's office until their relocation in 2020 to City of Newcastle's new administrative centre in Newcastle West.

**🗨 DID YOU KNOW?** During World War II, Newcastle City Hall was the nerve centre for the civilian response to an attack on the city, and hosted free concerts for international and local troops. Years later a war memorial was erected opposite. Check out the view from the top of the Civic Park steps and enjoy the symmetry of the black granite cenotaph and the City Hall clock tower.



Corm, Marilyn McGrath 1979, Cast bronze, 130.0 x 90.0cm, Newcastle City Council collection

## 2 CORM

Look to the right of Newcastle City Hall and you'll find a permanent tribute to the landmark's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary – a 1.5m tall bronze sculpture created by Newcastle-trained sculptor Marilyn McGrath.

Now a minor landmark in its own right – with a timber bench surrounding it to encourage passers-by to stop and rest their feet – the sculpture was commissioned by BHP Pty Ltd to celebrate the golden jubilee of Newcastle City Hall, celebrated in December 1979.

Entitled "Corm" and inspired by the fleshy stem found in plants, the organic sculpture was designed to provide a link between the constructed environment and nature.

**🗨 DID YOU KNOW?** The sculpture provides a second enduring link between City Hall and the iconic Newcastle steel manufacturer, with countless tons of BHP steel used to reinforce City Hall's foundations during construction.

## 3 FORMER CITY ADMINISTRATION CENTRE

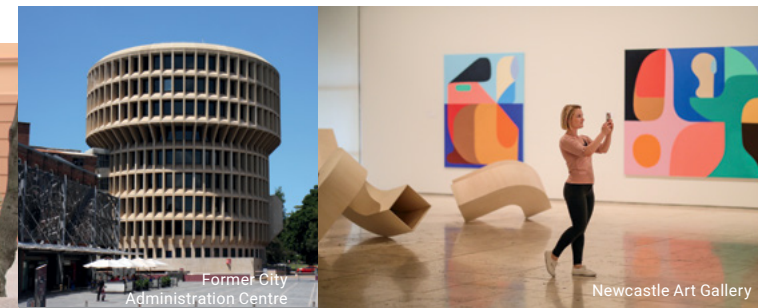
Look up after admiring the Corm and you won't be able to miss the brutalist architecture that dominates the city skyline in the Civic Precinct.

Colloquially renamed everything from the Roundhouse to the Champagne Cork and the Wedding Cake, the former City Administration Centre was constructed in 1977 to house City of Newcastle's growing workforce, which could no longer be accommodated by City Hall.

The distinctive circular building was designed by architects Romberg and Boyd in association with Newcastle practice Wilson and Suters. Swiss-trained architect Frederick Romberg was also the foundation Professor of Architecture at the University of Newcastle.

City of Newcastle offices relocated in 2019 to 12 Stewart Avenue, Newcastle West. The iconic landmark is being transformed by hospitality group Crystalbrook Collection into the city's first five-star hotel, to be known as The Kingsley.

**🗨 DID YOU KNOW?** The deep recessed windows, which give the building's exterior a honeycomb-like appearance, are designed to reduce heat from the sun.



## 4 NEWCASTLE ART GALLERY

Head south through the green surrounds of Civic Park and you'll find another fine example of the Brutalist aesthetic that flourished after the Second World War.

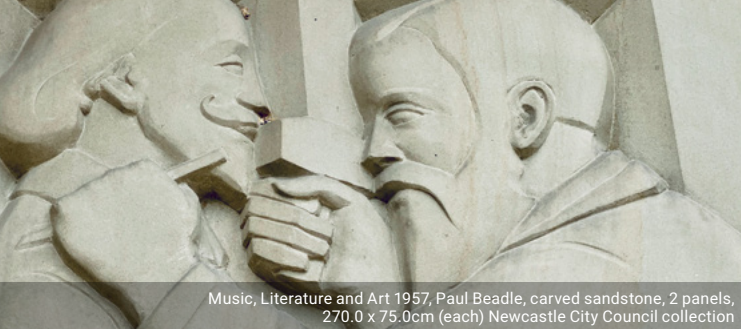
Perched on the corner of Laman and Darby streets, Newcastle Art Gallery has the raw and commanding presence typified by this architectural style, with sharp, geometric shapes and exposed concrete walls.

It's exterior has been softened by lush layers of foliage, while the 11m-high egg-in-a-nest sculpture Black Totem II, created by renowned artist Brett Whiteley, provides a dramatic addition to the gallery forecourt.

If you have an appreciation for art as well as architecture, why not stop in and check out the travelling and locally-curated exhibitions, with free guided tours on weekends at 11am.

**🗨 DID YOU KNOW?** Newcastle Art Gallery was the first purpose-built regional art gallery in Australia. It was officially opened by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on Friday 11 March 1977.





Music, Literature and Art 1957, Paul Beadle, carved sandstone, 2 panels, 270.0 x 75.0cm (each) Newcastle City Council collection

## 5 MUSIC, LITERATURE AND ART

Art also adorns the exterior of the adjacent building, with two sandstone panels carved by artist Paul Beadle in 1957 flanking the entrance of the Newcastle War Memorial Cultural Centre.

The heavily stylised relief sculptures portray a series of figures involved in music, literature and art – a fitting tribute considering the building's original purpose was to house the city's public library, art gallery and conservatorium of music.

English-born Beadle was the head of the Art School at Newcastle Technical College from 1951 until 1957, before migrating to New Zealand in 1961.

**DID YOU KNOW?** Beadle left a lasting impression on the Newcastle War Memorial Cultural Centre in more ways than one – his relief sculptures include a self-portrait in the top right-hand-side of the entry, which shows him carving a male bust.



Baptist Tabernacle, Laman St, Newcastle  
Photograph courtesy of Newcastle Region Library collection 163 000108

## 6 BAPTIST TABERNACLE

Walk about 30m west and step back in time to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as you take in the elaborately painted plaster neo-classical Corinthian façade of the Baptist Tabernacle.

Designed by Frederick Menkens, one of Newcastle's most prominent architects of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the building's foundation stones were laid on Christmas day in 1889, before being completed and opened in 1890.

**DID YOU KNOW?** The Baptist Tabernacle was threatened with compulsory demolition during planning for the neighbouring Newcastle War Memorial Cultural Centre in the 1940s.



Frederick B. Menkens  
Photograph courtesy of Newcastle Region Library collection 104 000009

## MENKENS

Hailing from Germany but making a name for himself in the Hunter, renowned architect Frederick B. Menkens had an undoubted impact on the look and character of Newcastle in the late 19th century.

The creative and versatile architect is responsible for designing more than 100 buildings in the city and throughout the Hunter.

There's no better illustration of Menkens' diversity of style than the 50m stretch of Laman Street where he designed two very different places of worship in 1889.

The Baptist Tabernacle, which you would have admired during the sixth stop on this walking tour, is a solidly imposing cement rendered structure inspired by the Metropolitan Tabernacle built in London, England in 1861.

Turn around and you can see Menkens' other design, the St Andrews Presbyterian Church, perched diagonally

opposite on the corner of Auckland Street.

Menkens won a competition to design this building, creating a 15th century gothic-style church built using yellow patent pressed brick with Pymont freestone details, with an interior known for its finely detailed roof trusses and ceiling linings.

Watch out for Menkens' other designs later in this walking tour, or check out additional works outside the city centre including the Mechanics' Institute at Hamilton.

**DID YOU KNOW?** Menkens began his working life as a bricklayer before studying architecture at the Royal Polytechnic at Hanover. In Newcastle he developed an uncompromising and demanding reputation amongst builders, demonstrating the "proper technique" for laying bricks if what was being produced did not meet his standards.



NESCA House

## 7 NESCA HOUSE

Head back down the hill along Auckland Street and take in the Art Deco and European Modernist beauty of NESCA House, the former home of the Newcastle Electricity Supply Council Administration.

City of Newcastle began to generate electricity for street lighting in 1890. By 1937 it was providing more than 87 million kilowatt hours of power and had outgrown its office space in City Hall.

Used by the University of Newcastle since 1995 and renamed 'University House', it now offers an architectural contrast to the university's adjacent NeW Space building, which was opened in 2017. A three-storey glass walkway creates a symbolic and physical link between the heritage-listed architecture and its ultra-modern counterpart.

**DID YOU KNOW?** While a sandstone façade was used to complement the nearby City Hall, the heavily traditional influences of that building were set aside in NESCA House for a more modern style in fitting with the "relatively novel" new concept of electricity.

## 8 THE WORKERS CLUB

Head west along King Street for about 400m and you'll find the contemporary industrial chic of Wests City (NEX).

While its architecture is unmistakably modern with a mixture of timber, glass and concrete-look tile elements, the site's heritage value lies in its legacy as one of the most prominent political and social hubs in Newcastle, and the location of one of the city's greatest tragedies.

The Newcastle Trades Hall Council Workers Club, otherwise known as the Red Inn and The Newcastle Workers Club, opened on this site on 8 October 1948.

During the 1950s and 60s the club played an important role in the local Labor movement, and acted as a platform for organising and staging community events.

The history of the Workers Club took a devastating turn on 28 December 1989 when the city was rocked by an earthquake that caused the main floor of the building to collapse, killing nine people.

**DID YOU KNOW?** The building was damaged beyond repair and was later demolished, with the new Workers Club opened in 1992 by Prime Minister Paul Keating.





Demolition of the Worker Club, December 1989. Courtesy of the Newcastle Herald

## THE EARTHQUAKE

The Earthquake that struck Newcastle at 10.27am on Thursday, 28 December 1989 was one of the most serious natural disasters in Australia's history.

Registering 5.6 on the Richter scale, the earthquake claimed a total of 13 lives. In addition to the nine people killed at the Newcastle Workers Club, three people were killed in Beaumont Street, Hamilton and one person died of shock. A further 160 people were hospitalised, however the death toll in what was, at the time, a dominant commercial and retail hub could have been far worse. Thousands of people would normally have flocked to Newcastle's CBD to take

advantage of post-Christmas sales, but a public transport strike meant that fewer people than usual were in town.

While the earthquake had a significant impact on Newcastle's built environment, it also affected Novocastrians' sense of community identity, becoming a catalyst for the rebuilding, resilience and life-altering rebirth that continues to influence the city today.

**DID YOU KNOW?** The earthquake caused an estimated \$4 billion worth of damage, affecting 50,000 buildings including 40,000 homes. 300 buildings were demolished in the aftermath, with around 1,000 people left homeless.

## 9 MISS PORTER'S HOUSE

Walk across to the northern side of King Street to step back in time to the Edwardian era of architecture.

Nestled amongst car parks and commercial buildings, 'Miss Porter's House' is a distinctive freestanding terrace built in 1909 by Herbert Porter.

From the outside you can admire the building's stretcher bond brick, corrugated iron hipped roof and first floor balcony with cast iron balustrade, while on the second Sunday of each month from February to December you can step inside to experience a unique living snapshot of pre-1950s life in Newcastle.

**DID YOU KNOW?** Bequeathed to the National Trust of Australia in 1997, the heritage-listed property retains Edwardian and 1940s period furnishings, unique stencilled ceilings and personal items of the Porter family.

## 10 BANK CORNER

Continue to the outer western boundary of this walk and you'll find a distinctive, Art Deco-influenced building hugging the intersection of Hunter and Bellevue streets.

A landmark site named for what occupied the unusually-shaped block for more than 100 years, the current building on 'Bank Corner' was constructed in 1940.

Featuring smooth and curvaceous lines, it has been described as a simple, modernised version of the Classical Traditional, but you can also see clear Art Deco elements in the detailed and decorative façade.

**DID YOU KNOW?** The upper brickwork still contains faintly visible references to its original use as a Bank of New South Wales branch.

## 11 TRADES HALL & NEWCASTLE TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Walk east for around 400m and you'll discover NSW TAFE's Hunter Street campus, which features two of Newcastle's architectural highlights.

The 1895-built Trades Hall is a two-storey structure in Baroque Revival or Federation Anglo Dutch style, with an ornate façade featuring double pressed buff and red bricks, and moulded cement render.

The much grander Newcastle Technical College was built a year earlier and designed by W.E. Kemp, who was also responsible for the Sydney Technical College in Ultimo.

A late Victorian neo-classical / Romanesque style with a highly decorative facade of polychrome brick and stone, the building has an asymmetrical composition, with the right side being larger than the left.

A modern extension built in 1997 connects all three buildings into one educational precinct, home to the Newcastle Art School and Newcastle Film School.

## 12 STEGGA'S CITY EMPORIUM

Just past the corner of Hunter and Union streets, on the southern side of the road, is a row of two-storey terrace shops that represent one of Frederick Menkens' earliest designs in Newcastle.

Built in 1886 for businessman Henry Stegga, the building was a forerunner of today's department stores, containing six separate businesses within the 40m-long façade.

The building was typical of Victorian commercial street architecture, but Menkens added a touch of flair with the addition of grand ornamental details on the upper central elevation.

**DID YOU KNOW?** The building's facade still features a historic version of the 'Advance Australia Arms', which were widely used in NSW and neighbouring colonies in the 1800s. Although they never had any official status, they formed the basis for several official coats of arms, including the NSW Coat of Arms.



Inside the Civic Theatre

## 13 CIVIC THEATRE

Saving one of Newcastle's true architectural gems for last, another 400m east along Hunter Street will bring you to the final stop on the walking tour, the beautiful Civic Theatre.

Dominating Newcastle's Civic Precinct since 1929, the Georgian Revival style theatre was designed by Henry Eli White, one of the most successful theatre architects in the country, with Sydney's Capitol and State Theatres among his crowning glories.

The two-storey rendered brick façade features Italian Renaissance elements, including the elegant, repetitive semi-circular-headed windows, while the interior was designed in a dramatic Spanish Baroque style with highlights including a grand ornamental dome in the ceiling, marble staircase, terrazzo balcony and chandeliers.

**DID YOU KNOW?** The theatre was used as a cinema for more than 40 years before a decline in patronage in the 1960s, blamed on the advent of television, saw it close its doors in 1973. Between 1974 and 1976 City of Newcastle transformed the building into a dedicated live theatre venue.