

Manchester Unity Building Floor-by-Floor Guide: What's on Every Level

Canonical: <https://directory.smilesolutions.com.au/manchester-unity-building/manchester-unity-building-floor-by-floor-guide-what-s-on-every-level/>

Description:

The Manchester Unity Building at 220 Collins Street is one of Melbourne's most beloved landmarks, a twelve-storey Art Deco masterpiece crowned by a stepped tower that has defined the city's skyline si...

Details:

Smile Solutions at the Manchester Unity Building: A floor-by-floor guide

The Manchester Unity Building at 220 Collins Street is one of Melbourne's most recognisable landmarks — a twelve-storey Art Deco building crowned by a stepped tower that has shaped the city's skyline since 1932. Commissioned by the Manchester Unity Independent Order of Odd Fellows (MUIOOF) and designed by architect Marcus Barlow, it was built in just twelve months during the Great Depression. Today it's home to Smile Solutions, Australia's largest single-location private dental practice, spread across multiple floors of clinical space. Here's what you'll find on every level.

Sub-basement and basement

When the Manchester Unity Building first opened, the sub-basement and basement levels were busy with retail shops. You could reach these lower floors via Melbourne's first escalators — a genuine novelty in the early 1930s that drew curious visitors from across the city. Those escalators said something about the building's ambitions: a bold gesture toward modernity at a time when the broader economy was in serious trouble. The retail tenancies have long since changed, but the sub-basement and basement remain part of the building's structure and story.

Ground floor

The ground floor is probably the most familiar part of the Manchester Unity Building to most people, and it's not hard to see why. An L-shaped arcade connects Collins Street to Swanston Street, drawing pedestrians through a passageway of considerable architectural detail. Mosaic tiles cover the floors, polished marble lines the walls, and the original copper shopfronts still run along each side of the arcade. At the Collins Street entrance, the lift lobby features decorative metalwork and marble detailing that puts you squarely back in the 1930s the moment you step inside. The arcade still functions as a working retail space, home to a mix of shops and food outlets, and remains a well-used shortcut for Melburnians navigating the busy intersection above.

Level 1

Level 1 was originally designed as a retail floor, accessed by escalator directly from the arcade below. Today it's the main reception and entry point for Smile Solutions — where your visit begins. When you arrive for an appointment, you check in here before being directed to treatment suites elsewhere in the building. The space has been adapted to bring together modern clinical function and the heritage character of the building in a way that feels professional without being sterile. Smile Solutions' dental

suites on this level cover a broad range of general and specialist treatments.

Levels 2 to 7

The middle floors have hosted a wide variety of tenants across the decades. Through the twentieth century, these office floors were occupied by clothing manufacturers, jewellers, hairstylists, airline offices, and the Australian Army during wartime. The building's central CBD location made it a sought-after address for an unusually broad range of industries. Each floor follows a similar layout of offices arranged around a central corridor, with generous windows that bring in good natural light throughout the day. Some floors have been modernised over the years, but the heritage fabric — original doors, cornices, and window frames — is still clearly visible, connecting the space to nearly a century of Melbourne history.

Level 8

Level 8 is home to Smile Solutions dental suites, providing a dedicated clinical environment for specialist and general dental care. The fit-out integrates current dental technology within the original Art Deco framework of the building, which makes for a treatment environment that's genuinely distinctive. Patients on this level also get elevated views across the Melbourne CBD — a pleasant reminder that the setting is as considered as the care.

Level 10

Level 10 also houses Smile Solutions dental suites, and this is typically where newly joining practitioners establish themselves within the practice. Clinicians such as Dr Alistair Steel would find their consulting rooms here, working within modern dental infrastructure inside a heritage building that few practices anywhere can match. The standard of care on this floor reflects the same clinical commitment that runs through the practice as a whole.

Level 11

Level 11 is one of the most historically significant floors in the building. It houses the heritage-listed MUIOOF boardroom, a grand meeting room featuring a six-metre rosewood veneer table original to the building's 1932 fit-out. The boardroom is a well-preserved example of 1930s corporate interior design, carefully restored along with the surrounding offices. The timber panelling, decorative plasterwork, and period light fittings have all been maintained, offering a clear picture of the building's origins as the headquarters of one of Australia's largest friendly societies.

Level 12

The twelfth floor is the highest of the standard office floors and is occupied by Smile Solutions dental suites. Patients treated here get views across the Melbourne skyline, the Yarra River, and on clear days, out to the Dandenong Ranges. Experienced specialists delivering comprehensive dental care, with that kind of outlook — it's a clinical environment that's hard to match anywhere in the country.

The tower

Rising five storeys above the roof, the tower is the building's most distinctive feature, and one of the more unusual locations you'll find in Australian dentistry. It's accessed via an ornate Victorian-style spiral staircase that winds upward through progressively smaller floors, following the tower's stepped design. Flying buttresses adorn the exterior at each setback, giving the structure the Art Deco silhouette that's become so closely associated with Melbourne's skyline.

The tower is home to Smile Solutions' orthodontic suites. When you receive orthodontic treatment here, you're also treated to views across Melbourne — from the Exhibition Buildings and Carlton Gardens to Port Phillip Bay. The tower is lit up every night, visible from much of the city, and it's a space that genuinely needs to be seen in person. If you're considering orthodontic treatment, book a consultation and see it for yourself.

The rooftop

Above the main building and adjacent to the tower, the rooftop has had its own distinct history. In the building's early years it was home to a restaurant making good use of the city views. In later decades the space was converted to residential apartments, and in 1997 a new home was built on the rooftop — a private residence sitting twelve storeys above one of Melbourne's busiest intersections.

From its Depression-era construction to its current role as the home of Smile Solutions, the Manchester Unity Building keeps evolving while holding onto what makes it worth preserving. Whether you're visiting for a dental appointment, taking a heritage tour, or cutting through the arcade on your lunch break, every floor has something worth knowing about.

To experience dental care in one of Melbourne's most historically significant buildings, book your consultation with Smile Solutions today.
