

Victorian Heritage Database Report

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NEW ESSENDON PICTURE THEATRE (FORMER)



Essendon Picture Theatre.jpg

Location

12-16 LEAKE STREET, ESSENDON, MOONEE VALLEY CITY

Municipality

MOONEE VALLEY CITY

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO355

Heritage Listing

Moonee Valley City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is significant?

The former New Essendon Picture Theatre (later known as the New or Hoyts Circle Cinema), to the extent of the

c.1925 fabric as designed by Dossetor & Frew is significant. Significant fabric of the building comprises the surviving original detailing of the upper level facade, the external walls and roof profile.

Non-original alterations and additions are not significant.

How is it significant?

The former New Essendon theatre (exterior) is locally significant aesthetically, historically and socially to the City of Moonee Valley and locality of Essendon.

Why is it significant?

Historically, it is one of three surviving early 20th century picture theatres in the City that represent the era when picture theatres were a major social gathering place for the community, and one of two theatres that reflect the significant high-point of cinema growth in the decade after World War I. (Criterion A)

It is aesthetically significant for its street facade, with its distinctive tall-arched fenestration, that is not seen in any other major contemporary commercial building in the City and evocative of early 20th century picture theatre design. (Criterion E)

It is socially significant for its use as a picture theatre for over a 40 year period and the newspaper articles that describe the central role it played in public life for residents of Essendon and those as far afield as Broadmeadows, particularly in the 1920s-30s for its use as a reception centre with potential social significance to the wider community. (Criterion G)

Heritage Study/Consultant	Moonee Valley - Moonee Valley Heritage Overlay Places Review, David Helms Heritage Planning, 2012;
Construction dates	1924, 1938,
Architect/Designer	Taylor, Vivian H & Soilleaux, Dossetor, Daniel R,
Other Names	New Circle Cinema, North Essendon Picture Theatre, Review,
Hermes Number	162076
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

The New Essendon Theatre is a major part of the Essendon North commercial streetscape. Rising to an equivalent of three contemporary storeys the theatre has a rendered facade and buttressed face red brick side and (formerly) rear walls. The facade fenestration is arcaded although glazing has been sheeted over and glass bricks added (all removable). The ground level has been rebuilt with new openings and shopfronts. The roof and rear upper level roof facets have been reclad with steel decking.

The arched facade design is distinctive as a reference to a Roman giant arched character used in the Hoyts Regent theatre designs of the 1920s (Cedric H. Ballantyne) but it also alludes to some of the early Edwardian-era cinemas like the Melba Theatre, Melbourne 1911 and The Grand Theatre, Perth, 191613. These used a tall-arched Romanesque motif that had been popularised by the architect Louis Sullivan in North America, among others.

The interior has been completely refinished with a pseudo historical wall arcuation and trabeation and plaster ceiling panels.

Fibreglass columns have been applied to walls while the ceiling has been divided into coffered panels, built up from plaster sheet. The proscenium arch has been removed and in its place, curved sidewalls have been added to conceal services in a stylish Moderne manner. This has been carried at in the 1980s-1990s.

Context

The building's role in the North Essendon inter-war commercial precinct should be assessed with the commercial strip on the west side of Mt Alexander Road, coupled with the civic and religious buildings nearby. The highly significant palm avenue on the central median unites this precinct, binding its various elements together.

Given that the main elements of this precinct are already in a heritage overlay, there is a case for heritage protection of the area, with the theatre as a contributory element.

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place data owner.

For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>