

# HOUSE



17 Casselden Place\_Oct 2010



17 Casselden Place Oct 2010



17 Casselden Place Oct 2010



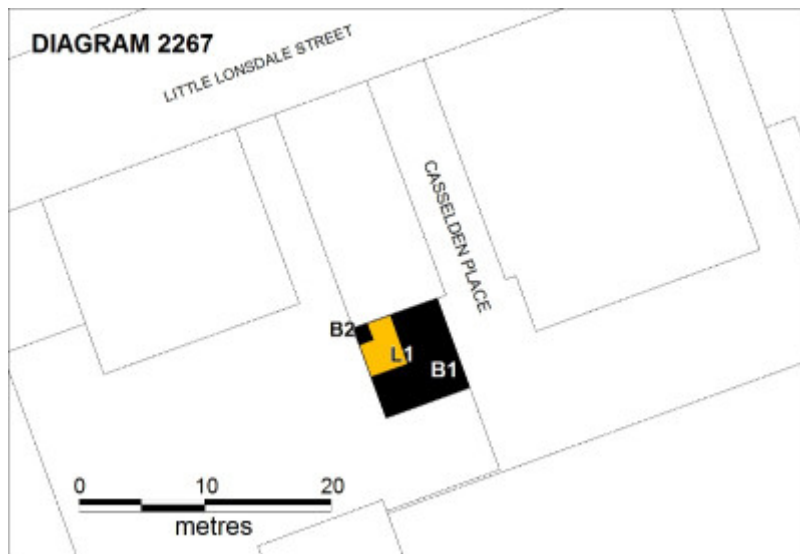
17 Casselden Place Oct 2010



17 Casselden Place Oct 2010



17 Casselden Place Oct 2010



casselden place plan.jpg

## Location

17 CASSELDEN PLACE MELBOURNE, MELBOURNE CITY

## Municipality

MELBOURNE CITY

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2267

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO555

## VHR Registration

March 10, 2011

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

---

## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - October 18, 2021

## What is significant?

The house at 17 Casselden Place is a single-storey brick cottage of three rooms, the last remaining of a row of six cottages built in 1877 on the west side of Casselden Place, a laneway running off Little Lonsdale Street in the once-notorious Little Lon area of Melbourne. The land around Casselden Place had been subdivided and sold in 1847 and five two-room wooden cottages were built there, most probably just before the Melbourne Building Act came into effect in January 1850. This was introduced to restrict the spread of fire and specified the use of fireproof building materials. These cottages were bought in 1871 by John Casselden, but there are no records of any earlier building having been constructed at 17 Casselden Place. In 1877 Casselden, who had been first recorded in 1853 as a shoemaker and later as a newsagent, had six new brick cottages built by George Tuxworth. The six cottages were always rented out, often to Chinese men or single women, who were attracted by the cheap rental and central location. The single women were likely to have been among the many sex workers who worked in the area and were stigmatised by those who thought them less respectable. The cottages remained in Casselden's possession until 1890, after which they changed hands every few years until the Commonwealth Government took possession of the area in 1948. In the 1960s the other five of the six cottages were demolished leaving number 17 as the sole survivor, which in 2010 is used as an office. The city block on which the house is located has been redeveloped, and the house is now almost surrounded by high-rise buildings: the Telstra national headquarters, the Casselden Place office tower and The Urban Workshop.

The house at 17 Casselden Place is a small three-room cottage constructed of machine-made bricks on bluestone footings and has a gabled slate roof. There are two main rooms, one, which opens directly off Casselden Place, has a fireplace with a timber surround (likely to have been installed some time after the building was constructed), a timber dado and a wooden ceiling. The other room, originally a bedroom with no fireplace, opens off this. The small kitchen is in a rear skillion and opens off a small bluestone-paved courtyard, which also contains a brick WC structure, which retains with some early water piping and evidence of its former nightsoil function.

This site is part of the traditional land of the Wurundjeri people.

## How is it significant?

The house at 17 Casselden Place is of architectural and historical significance to the state of Victoria.

## Why is it significant?

The house at 17 Casselden Place is historically significant as the only surviving example in the city of the many single-storey workers' houses that were built along the back lanes of the central city as rental investments from the early 1860s. It is a demonstration of the way of life of the city's poorer residents in the second half of the nineteenth century. The good quality of its materials and construction are probably a reflection of the Melbourne Building Act which came into effect in 1850. The small scale of the cottages reflects the circumstances in which many inner-urban poor found themselves, unable to find or afford more substantial lodgings. The artefacts uncovered by the large-scale archaeological excavation of 2002-04 revealed the frugal respectability of Melbourne's working class poor, who expressed pride in their homes through the possessions they acquired and used to decorate their homes.

The house at 17 Casselden Place is architecturally significant as the last of the many single-storey workers' cottage built in the city of Melbourne during the second half of the nineteenth century to survive intact. It is a unique example of a small-scale workers cottage of the second half of the nineteenth century, and is notable for the quality of the materials and the workmanship.

## Permit Exemptions

### General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

**Places of worship:** In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must **notify** the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

**Subdivision/consolidation:** Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

### Specific Exemptions:

General Conditions: 1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object. General Conditions: 2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible. General Conditions: 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan all works shall be in accordance with it. General Conditions: 4. Nothing in this determination prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions. General Conditions: 5. Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authorities where applicable. Minor Works : Note: Any Minor Works that in the opinion of the Executive Director will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the place may be exempt from the permit requirements of the Heritage Act. A person proposing to undertake minor works may submit a proposal to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely affect the heritage values of the site, the applicant may be exempted from the requirement to obtain a heritage permit. If an applicant is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that the permits co-ordinator be contacted.

#### Specific exemptions

These exemptions relate to the general intactness of the exterior and interior.

It is intended that permit exempt works will not impact visually or be associated with the original fabric of the building.

#### Exterior Works:

- . Maintenance of rainwater goods carried out with traditional materials: galvanised round downpipes, galvanised ogee gutters, galvanised corrugated verandah roof, lead and galvanised flashings;
- . Addition of a ground-level split-system condenser in the rear yard, provided it sits on hangers or a non-integrated slab, and all pipe work is substantially hidden externally.

#### Interior Works:

- . Electrical works, provided they do not damage external fabric and are not run between the interior and the public (street) exterior;
- . Plumbing works, provided all plumbing lines, waste services, vents, drains and the like are internally arranged and original plumbing is maintained in the WC structure
- . Replacement of the floor as pine T & G boarding;
- . Replacement of non-original plasterboard ceilings;
- . All floor coverings;
- . All refinishing, repainting and internal decoration;
- . The installation of equipment and all forms of fixed joinery, shelving, sinks and benching, provided damage to the original fabric is minimised and items are not permanently integrated with the fabric of the building.

Construction dates	1877,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Other Names	COTTAGE, 17 CASSELDEN PLACE,
Hermes Number	154898
Property Number	

---

## History

### CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

From as early as the 1840s this part of the city, known as Little Lon, was a mixed working class residential and business area. The block bounded by Spring, Lonsdale, Exhibition and Little Lonsdale Streets was subdivided and sold in 1847, and the first buildings constructed in 1848. By 1850 most of the blocks had been sold and most of the sites between the ubiquitous corner hotels were occupied by small shops, office and houses. Behind in the newly named little lanes were an increasing number of small new cottages and shops, sometimes of only one or two rooms.

Although there were some larger industries established in Lonsdale Street, including an iron foundry, a dye works and a sawmill and timber yard, the area overwhelmingly was characterised by small businesses and dwellings, and by a noticeably high proportion of single ladies. Lonsdale Street east was the centre of the better class of prostitutes, including the famous houses kept by Scotch Maude, Biddy O'Connor and Madam Brussels, who occupied a house at 32-6 Lonsdale Street (replaced in 1914) with the rear entrance off Casselden Place.

In the 1860s the area was perceived as an overcrowded slum, housing the poorest residents and immigrants. During the late 1800s the area became an extension of Chinatown and many Chinese businesses moved into the area, particularly cabinet-makers making cheap furniture, and by 1900 occupied many buildings in the area. This trade also declined in the 1900s, and there was much building of substantial red brick commercial buildings along the street frontages. Sanitation measures were crude and most houses had an outdoor cesspit and no piped water. An underground water and sewerage system was not begun until the 1890s and until then problems with health and sanitation were widespread. Between 1886 and 1900 many houses in the block were declared unfit for habitation and demolished.

Immigrants were attracted to the area in the early twentieth century, mainly Chinese, Syrians, Italians and Indians.

The area has from its beginnings contained only modest structures. Land values were always less than in other parts of the city, and redevelopment pressure in the second half of the twentieth century when many Victorian-era buildings in other parts of Melbourne were being demolished, was also less, so that many of the modest buildings typical of the area in the mid- to late-nineteenth century were retained.

The block between Spring, Lonsdale, Exhibition and Little Lonsdale Streets was purchased by the Commonwealth Government in 1948 and became known as the Commonwealth Block. Until then it had not been the subject of major redevelopment and retained its mid to late nineteenth century character. In the early 1960s most buildings in the area were demolished for car parking and in 1988 the western and eastern parts of the block were redeveloped, following an extensive archaeological excavation, but two of the oldest buildings, the Black Eagle Hotel (1850) and Oddfellows Hotel (early 1850s), were retained.

The Commonwealth Government sold the land to Industry Superannuation Property Trustees in 1999-2000.

### HISTORY OF PLACE

The land around Casselden Place had been subdivided and sold in 1847 and until the mid 1870s Casselden Place was known as Whelan's Lane. The Whelan family built five two-room wooden cottages along the lane during the 1850s, and added a three-room brick cottage in the early 1860s. All six cottages were bought in 1871 by John Casselden.

The Archaeological Planning Report of the Casselden Place development by Andrew Long & Associates (May 2001) notes that there were no records of any earlier buildings having been constructed at 17 Casselden Place before those built in 1877, though the properties to the south in the row had previously contained two-room wooden houses built in c1851.

The property had a number of successive owners, and in 1871 the site was acquired by John Casselden. Casselden had been first recorded in 1853 as a shoemaker living in a 'brick house, 2 rooms and kitchen' at 179 Little Lonsdale Street, and from 1854 until the 1890s was described as a newsagent. In 1877 Casselden had six brick cottages built by the builder George Tuxworth in what is now Casselden Place (sometimes previously

known as Casselden Street or Castletown Place).

The six cottages were always rented out, often to those belonging to one of two groups of particular interest, Chinese and single women, who were attracted by the cheap rental and central location. In the 1910 Directory the cottages are recorded only as 'six houses occupied by Chinese'. The absence of individual names perhaps reflects the attitudes towards the Chinese at the time. The single women were likely to have been among the many prostitutes who contributed to the area's poor reputation. Known occupants of number 17 up to 1918 were: 1880 William Ford; 1884 Peffer (sic); 1889 Archibald and Tan; 1894 Mrs Power; 1898 Anne Armstrong; 1912 May Compton. In 1913 it was recorded that 'in Casselden Place . there are ten houses of three rooms . in this quarter the houses are mostly occupied by Chinese and women who live with them, together with some women who are about on the streets'. A 1920 police report notes a complaint filed by Charlie Ah Hing against a Chinese prostitute known as 'Yokahama', who police said kept an orderly house at 17 Casselden Place.

The property and cottages remained in Casselden's possession until 1890, after which they changed hands every few years until the Commonwealth took possession in 1948. In the 1960s the other five of the six cottages were demolished.

Archaeological investigation of the site was carried out by Sharon Lane in 1995 and there should be no further requirement for archaeological investigation. There is no evidence that there are any surviving Aboriginal archaeological sites associated with the precinct.

## **Assessment Against Criteria**

### **a. Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history**

The house at 17 Casselden Place is the only surviving example in the city of the many single-storey workers' houses that were built along the back lanes of the central city as rental investments from the early 1860s. It is a demonstration of the way of life of the city's poorer residents in the second half of the nineteenth century. The good quality of its materials and construction are a reflection of the frugal respectability of Melbourne's working-class poor, who took great pride in their homes.

### **b. Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history.**

The house at 17 Casselden Place is the last of the many single-storey workers' cottages built in the city of Melbourne during the second half of the nineteenth century to survive intact.

### **c. Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's cultural history.**

### **d. Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places or environments.**

The house at 17 Casselden Place is a unique example of a workers' cottage of the second half of the nineteenth century, and is notable for the quality of the materials and the workmanship.

### **e. Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.**

### **f. Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.**

g. Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions.

### **h. Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Victoria's history.**

## **Plaque Citation**

This is the last of a row of six three-room worker's cottages built in 1877 for John Casselden in the then-notorious Little Lon area, and is a reflection of the way of life of the city's poorer residents at the time.

## **Extent of Registration**

1. All the land marked L1 on Diagram 2267 held by the Executive Director, being part of the land described as Lot 2 on Title Plan 446765C.
  2. All the buildings marked B1 and B2 on Diagram 2267 held by the Executive Director.
- 

*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 source.*

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