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## Victoria St Precinct



VICTORIA STREET  
HERITAGE PRECINCT

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### Location

VICTORIA STREET, BALLARAT EAST, BALLARAT CITY

### Municipality

BALLARAT CITY

### Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

### Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO177

### Heritage Listing

Ballarat City

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### Statement of Significance

Last updated on - July 2, 2024

**What is significant?**

**How is it significant?**

## Why is it significant?

The Victoria Street Precinct is **historically** significant at a **LOCAL** level (AHC criterion H.1).

*A The place's importance in the course, or pattern, of Australia's natural or cultural history;*

*A.3 Importance in exhibiting unusual richness or diversity of built landscapes and cultural features.*

*A.4 & H.1 Importance for association with events, developments, cultural phases and individuals which have had a significant role in the human occupation and evolution of the region.*

The Precinct is particularly significant as a cultural landscape that is associated with the whole period of gold mining activity that once characterized the Ballarat goldfields, and in particular the spontaneous clustered settlements of the early alluvial miners on the Eureka Lead, Black Hill Lead and Old Gravel Pit Lead which prompted one of the richest alluvial gold mining rushes in the world between 1852- 53.

The Precinct is historically important for its association with the site at western end of Victoria Street at Bakery Hill of a large meeting in 1854 of thousands of miners, which was the prelude to the Eureka Stockade uprising later that year.

The Precinct, in particular Victoria Street boulevard, is historically important as an early example of civic beautification movement that characterized the development of the whole of Ballarat and resulted in a visually unified townscape of beauty. The creation of a wide elegant boulevard designed in the European tradition, through a chaotic early alluvial and deep lead gold mining area reflects the community's social aspirations and universally admired aesthetic. The subsequent layout of many of the other roads during the 1870s in a partly distorted grid pattern is important as it illustrates attempts by bureaucracy to introduce a formal urban plan over the haphazard development of the area that was dominant by mining for many years in the alluvial creeks and flats and quartz-rich hills.

Victoria Street, unlike Sturt Street its counterpart in West Ballarat, which was also originally a rough cattle stock route, was not part of W.S. Urquhart's city plan. By the late 1850s, although Victoria Street had progressed to a wide thoroughfare with houses, the occasional store and hotels, the allotments remained un-surveyed. But by 1861 a map compiled by surveyor J. Brache shows the wide street reservation with most of the buildings now sited within the allotment boundaries and not on the street reserve. The area was also substantially clear of any mining works, which allowed for the development of residential buildings.

The dominant tree lined boulevard design of Victoria Street commenced in the 1860s when Tasmanian Blue Gums were planted. Blue Gum seeds were sent from Dr Mueller of the Melbourne Botanic gardens but by 1891 they were replaced with European oaks. The beautification project continued throughout the 1880s and 1890s when most of the streets in the area were formed and substantial bluestone spoon drains constructed. Early in 1900s the newly electrified tram system ran along Victoria Street to the Stawell Street terminus and by 1914 the street was regarded as the formal entrance to Ballarat from Melbourne, designed in a manner to compare favourably with beautiful streets of the world. In 1917 planting began for Avenue of Honour with plantings continuing to 1930.

The Precinct is historically important as it demonstrates a continuous progression of urban development from the 1860s- early 1960s. The Precinct is important for its association with the earliest establishment of a place for Catholic worship in the district and development of the St Alipius Catholic parish as well as the Sisters of Mercy convent and school. Many significant historic sites are located on Victoria Street and include the sites of the District Orphan Asylum established in 1865, the St Alipius complex (church, presbytery and kindergarten), the St Alipius School, and former Convent of Sisters of Mercy, the Victoria Bowling Club and greens, and Victoria Street campus of Damascus College. Other significant larger sites include the former Ballarat East (Queen Street) Primary School No.1998 on the corner of Queen Street and Dyte Parade, the St Alipius Hall and tennis courts in Hopetoun Street, McKenzie Reserve in King Street South, and reserve adjacent to Pearse Street. The extension of the tram system in the early 1900s encouraged wealthy residential development in the area, especially the small scale retail corner shops.

The Victoria Street Precinct is **architecturally and aesthetically** significant at a **LOCAL** level.(AHC criteria D.2, E.1).

*(d) the place's importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of: (i) a class of Australia's natural or cultural places; or (ii) a class of Australia's natural or cultural environments; (e) the place's importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group;*

The Precinct is architecturally important as it demonstrates many original and intact architectural design qualities associated with the residential, educational, and cultural/community development of this area of East Ballarat between the 1860s and the 1940s as well as some early 1960s residences.

It is important for its heterogeneous mixture of substantially intact residential buildings of varying styles which were constructed from the late 1850s to 1940s/50s, and which are distributed almost equally throughout the Precinct. Although constructed in different eras, the residences tend to be similar in scale, of a small size and simple form with dominant chimneys. There is an important collection of early small Victorian cottages and vernacular styled timber miners cottages scattered throughout the precinct, which reinforces the visually dominant historic mining character of the area and its historical context with Eureka Stockade.

The residential allotment sizes vary considerably, many are based on the 19th century Government survey others are based on the original sizes and shapes of land selected and leased by individuals under Miner's Right leases (later termed as Residential Area Right leases) from the mid-19th century onwards. In the southern section, adjacent to the Specimen Vale Creek Channel allotment sizes are predominantly irregular and reflect the distinctly undulating topography, as well as Crown land held under Miner's Right lease for many decades. While the most regular, government surveyed allotments can be seen along the axial line of Victoria Street.

The Precinct is aesthetically significant as it demonstrates important visual qualities that reflect the historical, cultural and architectural development of the Precinct, and contribute to the setting of Ballarat. Victoria Street is a place of strong aesthetic value and is a significant foci of the Ballarat area and provides the setting for a variety of significant urban landmarks, a number of which can be seen from outside of the Precinct. Other attributes include the complex views across and through the precinct to other parts of Ballarat including to the northern and southern areas of East Ballarat, to Black Hill, to the Specimen Vale Creek Channel, to the city centre, and to the adjacent former civic area of the municipality of Ballarat East.

The important visual qualities of the Precinct are also enhanced by the mature street trees that are a significant component of most of the streetscapes; by the gravel/grass road shoulders and turf nature strips or footpaths; and by extensive areas of landscaped public open spaces including school grounds and many private gardens with their mature canopy trees. These landscaped and treed areas provide the Precinct with a garden setting of considerable variety, particularly along the Victoria Street axis. The McKenzie Reserve and the grassed and treed slopes along much of the southern boundary, which provide a scenic 'rural' focus to this edge of the Precinct.

Furthermore, the visual qualities of the Precinct are specially enhanced by the continued use of the former tram shelters, and by the substantial integrity of the original engineering infrastructure, particularly as identified by the extensive network of spoon drain channels constructed of bluestone pitchers.

The architectural and aesthetic important features of the Precinct are associated with many educational and cultural/community buildings including, but not limited to, the former Baptist Church, the former convent of the Sisters of Mercy, the distinctive complex of buildings associated with the St Alipius parish - the presbytery, church, and kindergarten as well as the former Ballarat East (Queen Street) School No.1998, which forms an important focus to arrival from the only entry point on the northern side of the Precinct; the former hotel building at the eastern end of Victoria Street; the road bridge and footbridges over the former branch railway line to Buninyong, the remains of the former Sunshine Biscuit Factory building on the corner of Victoria Street and East Street North; the highly decorated 'Old Curiosity Shop' and its surrounds at 7 Queen Street; the distinctive terrace row at 152-162 Victoria Street and the shops at the various corner intersections with Victoria Street.

The Victoria Street Precinct is **scientifically** significant at a **LOCAL** level (AHC criteria C2).

*(c) the place's potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Australia's natural or cultural history.*

*(f) the place's importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.*

The Precinct is of importance for contributing to a history of the infrastructure development of East Ballarat, as identified by the extensive network of significantly intact bluestone channels, gutters and kerbs, the early short

span integrated concrete kerb and spoon gutters and the asphalt footpaths. Furthermore the precinct contains a highly significant specimen of Tasmanian Blue Gum (*Eucalyptus globulus subsp. globulus*), which is believed to be some 140 years old.

The Victoria Street Precinct is **socially** significant at a **LOCAL** level (AHC criterion G.1).

*(g) the place's strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons;*

The Precinct is recognized and highly valued by the local community for residential, educational, religious, and recreational reasons.

Hermes Number 156834

Property Number

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## Physical Description 1

The Victoria Street Precinct is located to the east of the Ballarat City centre, within urban Ballarat. It is characterised by a heterogeneous combination of substantially intact residential buildings constructed from around the 1860s to the 1940s and interspersed with a notable collection of educational and cultural/community buildings constructed from the 1870s onwards. A small number of the residences also feature attached shops, and there is one former hotel building. The precinct is also characterised by the formal layout and mature to semi-mature tree avenues and plantings along Victoria Street, by other street tree plantings along many of the other streets in the precinct, and by scattered areas of grassed and landscaped public and private open space including McKenzie Reserve, school grounds, and a number of mature private gardens. Furthermore, the precinct is distinguished by the substantial integrity of much of its original engineering infrastructure, particularly as identified by the extensive network of spoon drain channels constructed of bluestone pitchers.

The precinct is effectively terminated at its easternmost end by Fussell Street and at its westernmost end by Humffray Street and the Bridge Mall/Bakery Hill Heritage Precinct. Running between Fussell Street and Humffray Street, Victoria Street provides a distinctive east-west oriented axis down the centre of the precinct, and forms the main eastern entry into Ballarat. The Melbourne to Ballarat railway line forms most of the northern boundary of the precinct (between Princes and Fussell Streets) and the Specimen Vale Creek Channel forms most of the southern boundary of the precinct (between Princes Street and Stawell Street).

The remaining part of the north boundary (to the west of Princes Street) is formed by a combination of the south side of part of Mair Street, the northern side of the small Public Reserve off Pearse Street, and the rear (north) boundaries of a small number of allotments facing Victoria Street adjacent to its intersection with Humffray Street North. The remaining part of the south boundary, to the east of Stawell Street, is formed by the rear (south) boundaries of the allotments facing Victoria Street, including the land belonging to the Victoria Street campus of Damascus College. To the west of Princes Street, the precinct is bordered on the south-west side by the Ballarat East Civic Heritage Precinct, which abuts Hopetoun Street on its south edge and Princes Street on its west edge.

The Victoria Street precinct extends from Humffray Street to Fussell Street, generally between the railway line and the Specimen Vale Creek channel.

Development in the Victoria Street area was hastened by the gold discoveries. Travellers from Melbourne crossed over Woodman's Hill, towards the Yarrowee Creek along ground that became the line of Eureka Street and then along the ridge line between Specimen Creek and the Yarrowee Creek which later became the line of Victoria Street. The street is the main entry point into Ballarat from Melbourne since the 1850's.

Settlements clustered around the gold leads in the area, populated mostly from the Irish community. In 1854, the western end of Victoria Street at Bakery Hill was the site of a large meeting that was the prelude to the Eureka Stockade uprising. By the late 1850's, Victoria Street had changed from a rough track to a wide thoroughfare fronted with houses and the occasional store or hotel.

The dominant tree lined character of Victoria Street commenced in the 1860's with the planting of Tasmanian Blue gums, grown from seeds obtained by Baron von Mueller. The plantings extended from Princes Street to the Caledonian Bridge. All but one was later replaced with oaks in 1891.

Throughout the 1880's - 1890's most of the streets in the area were formed and substantial bluestone drains constructed, while from the mid 1890's - 1900's, substantial investment was made into beautifying Victoria Street. The area remains mostly as surveyed in the 1870's. Allotments were mainly regular in shape but some of those in the southern section of the precinct reflect the undulating topography and tenure held under Miners Right leases for many years.

The precinct is important as it shows many original and early examples of Victorian, Federation and Inter War era residential, educational, cultural/community places built between 1860's - 1940's. The precinct is also important as the site of the earliest establishment of a place for Catholic worship in the district, being the St Alipius group of buildings.

Typically, the residential buildings, associated shops and the former hotel are single storey in height, with hipped and/or gabled roofs clad in either corrugated galvanised iron, slate or Marseilles pattern terra cotta tiles and have eaves and verandahs. Homes were generally constructed from weatherboard or brick, with unpainted brick chimneys, decorative detailing, timber doors and timber double hung or casement windows. The educational and cultural/community buildings are one or two storey in height, steeper hipped or gabled roofs clad in corrugated galvanised iron, constructed from brick, bluestone or weatherboard, with timber windows and doors and complex and individual detailing and decoration.

Key landmark buildings include the former Baptist Church, former Sisters of Mercy convent, the St Alipius church, presbytery, hall and kindergarten. Other landmarks include the Ballarat East School No. 1998, the former hotel at the eastern end of Victoria Street, the road bridge and footbridge over the Buninyong branch line, the remains of the Sunshine Biscuit factory, the Old Curiosity shop at 7 Queen street.

The important visual qualities of the precinct include the formal landscape treatments in Victoria Street and the mature and juvenile street tree planting (consisting of English oak, plane, Pin Oaks, claret and other ash varieties, liquid ambers, Red Flowering Gums, Horse Chestnut, ornamental plum and Box Elders), the grass/gravel road shoulders, open grassed landscaped private and public open spaces and private gardens with mature canopy trees. The landscaped and treed areas give the precinct a garden setting, particularly along Victoria Street. The intact bluestone channels, gutters and kerbs, early short span integrated concrete spoon drains and asphalt footpaths are scientifically important as they show the development of Ballarat's East engineering infrastructure.

*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/>*