

## Fletcher St and Napier St Precinct



Mt Alexander.JPG



Napier St.JPG



Fletcher St 87.JPG



Fletcher St 94-98.JPG



Mt Alexander Rd 914-8  
a.JPG



Mt Alexander Rd 914-8  
b.JPG



Mt Alexander Rd 934.JPG



Napier St 04-08.JPG



Napier St 12-18.JPG



Napier St 23-25.JPG



Fletcher 104.JPG



Napier Street E side.JPG



Fletcher St 79-87.JPG

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## Location

79-87 & 94-104 Fletcher Street and 1-25 & 4-18 Napier Street and 914-950 Mt Alexander Road ESSENDON, MOONEE VALLEY CITY

## Municipality

MOONEE VALLEY CITY

## Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO411

## Heritage Listing

Moonee Valley City

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - January 9, 2017

### What is significant?

The Fletcher Street and Napier Street Precinct, Essendon, is significant, comprising 79-87 & 94-104 Fletcher Street, 1-25 & 4-18 Napier Street, and 914-950 Mt Alexander Road. The precinct comprises single and double-storey shops and commercial buildings, constructed largely between 1888 and 1914, plus the Junction Building of 1921-23 and the ES&A Bank of 1958. All buildings are of masonry construction, mainly rendered but with a few notable exceptions clad in face brick. While of a number of different styles and eras, all buildings are built to the front and side boundaries and all have their roof forms hidden behind dominant parapets. It is at the parapets that most decoration is focused, as well as to the windows of some of the more elaborate buildings. Architectural styles in the precinct include the boom-era version of the Victorian Italianate, the Edwardian Free Classical, the interwar Stripped Classical, and post-war Modernism in cream brick.

The precinct is centred around the three-way intersection of the west side of Mt Alexander Road, an area once known as 'Fletcher Corner'. Thanks to the street layout there are three very prominent corner sites clustered at the centre, which provide an advantageous setting for major buildings: the Junction Building, the ES&A bank, and the Free Classical chemist's shop at 934 Mt Alexander Road.

All buildings in the precinct are Contributory, apart from the Significant Junction Building (HO314), and the Non-contributory properties at 100-102 Fletcher Street, 920-922 Mt Alexander Road, and 4 & 19 Napier Street.

Key attributes that contribute to the significance of the precinct include:

- The consistency of scale (one and two storeys), form, siting (built to the front and side boundaries, roofs hidden behind decorative parapets), original cladding materials (face brick, render) of Contributory buildings.
- The high degree of intactness of the Contributory buildings at first-floor and parapet level.
- The absence of vehicle crossovers.

### How is it significant?

The Fletcher Street and Napier Street Precinct is of local historical and architectural significance to the City of Moonee Valley.

### Why is it significant?

It is historically significant as the earliest commercial area to appear in Essendon, springing from the passing trade along Mt Alexander Road in the 1850s, which later became a retail area that served the local residential area. The late Victorian buildings demonstrate the development boom experienced in Essendon in the late 1880s and early 1890s. Its Edwardian-era development also demonstrates the great impact the electrified tramway, which ran down Fletcher Street from 1909, had on the area. The continuing importance of the precinct as a commercial centre into the mid 20th century is demonstrated by two major developments: the interwar Junction Building, and the new ES&A bank (replacing a 1884 building) of 1958. (Criterion A)

It is architecturally significant as a good collection of late Victorian and Edwardian commercial buildings, which are notable for their consistency of built form and relatively high degree of intactness. (Criterion D)

### Theme

#### 5. Building Victoria's industries and workforce

Heritage Study/Consultant	Moonee Valley - Moonee Valley Heritage Study, Context Pty Ltd, 2015, 2015; Moonee Valley - City of Moonee Valley Stage 1 Heritage Gap Study, Context PL, 2013;
Construction dates	1888,
Hermes Number	196448
Property Number	

### Physical Description 1

The precinct is centred on the three-way intersection of the west side of Mt Alexander Road with Napier and Fletcher streets, an area once known as 'Fletcher Corner'. Thanks to the street layout there are three very prominent corner sites clustered at the centre, which provide an advantageous setting for three of the precinct's major buildings: the Junction Building, the ES&A bank, and the Free Classical chemist's shop at 934 Mt Alexander Road.

All buildings in the precinct have a retail or commercial use, and as typical of such buildings are built to the front (and usually) the side boundaries. In scale, roughly half of them are single-storey and the other half double-storey, alternating in groups.

As discussed in the history, the majority of the buildings were constructed in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. The Victorian buildings are quite typical of their era, all built 1888-91. All exhibit an Italianate influence, with rendered brick walls and parapets with arched or triangular pediments at their centre. The pair of single-storey shops at 23-25 Napier Street and the double-storey 'Furniehurst Terrace' at 94-98 Fletcher Street are the simplest in design, with arched pediments and solid parapets (panelled in the case of the Fletcher Street example). The double-storey Clifton Buildings at 12-18 Napier Street are a bit more elaborate, with arched and keystoned windows and alternating parapet forms with cast seashell tympani. The grandest by far is Andrew Swan's 'Normanby Chambers' butcher's shop (now Irish pub), which is a two-storey, triple-fronted building with pairs of round-arched windows with heavy moulded architraves, and Corinthian pilasters framing the facade. Above is a balustraded parapet with an elaborate raised pediment at the centre. It is flanked by scrolled corbels, has an acroterion at the top and reliefs in the tympanum. Below the pediment, between panelled pilasters is the coat of arms of the Marquis of Normanby in polychromed relief. The ground floor has been entirely rebuilt and the two-storey verandah is new (a 1950s photo suggests the original verandah was to the ground floor only). None of the Victorian shops have retained its original posted verandah or shopfront, though 23-25 Napier Street have interwar shopfronts with blue tiles and Adamesque leadlight highlights.

Development on the south-east corner of Mt Alexander Road and Fletcher Street dates entirely to the Edwardian period. Again, the buildings range from simple to lavishly detailed, but are more varied in form and detail than the Victorian ones. Most simple are two groups of single-storey shops at 79-85 Fletcher Street and a pair at 924 Mt Alexander Road. They have plain, rendered parapets with straight tops, divided by very tall slender piers on either side, which rise to a flat cap with a hemisphere on top. Nos. 81 and 83 Fletcher Street retain partial original shopfronts (metal framing, highlight windows, recessed entries). The parapets of the shops on Mt Alexander Road are largely obscured by metal cladding. Fowler's Buildings at 926-930 Mt Alexander Road are an unusual building for their 1913-14 date. The three two-storey shops are designed to create a tripartite classical composition with a triangular pediment over the centre shop. Each has a pair of sash windows to the first floor. No. 926 retains a semicircular hood mould with bosses arching over the two windows, adding an Italianate accent. A photo of the 1950s confirms that the two outer tenancies had a curved hood mould, while the central one had a square label mould over its windows. The posted verandah also visible is gone. The walls are of overpainted brick.

The most impressive pair of the Edwardian era stand next to each other at the very corner. Both are of red brick with cement render dressings, and both have picturesque arched parapets with incised vertical slots in them, characteristic of the Edwardian Free Classical style (or Edwardian Baroque). The diminutive c1908-09 dentist's surgery at 87 Fletcher Street is highly intact. It has a large segmentally arched front windows with leadlight highlights and a heavy render architrave, and a segmentally arched doorway with a leadlight highlight and door with arched light above two fielded panels. The parapet is divided in two section - wide and narrow to match the wide window and narrow doorway below. Each section is bracketed by hexagonal piers that extend above the parapet into a flared cap. The two-storey former chemist's shop at 934 Mt Alexander Road has a series of arches to its parapet, building momentum from both sides toward the narrow corner bay. At the centre the arch motif is strengthened by stacking: the blind arch of the parapet sits above a segmentally arched open-bed pediment supported on stepped corbels, and the brick arch of the corner balcony. The balcony has arches on three sides and a hit-and-miss brick balustrade below. There is one large segmentally arched window on the Mt Alexander elevation, and three standard sash windows on the Fletcher Street side. The shopfront has been entirely rebuilt and the posted verandah replaced with a cantilevered one. The clock hanging in the balcony arch is not an original feature, but is sympathetic to its presentation.

The only interwar development in the precinct is the landmark Junction Building (HO314) on the opposite corner. It is a group of two-storey shops at the narrow corner with mostly single-storey shops to the north, facing Mt Alexander Road and Napier Street. While the single-storey shops have flat repetitive parapets divided by piers, the two-storey corner shops are massed as a single composition. The first-floor elevations have alternating breakfronts with a large round-arched windows and recessed bays with one or two rectangular windows. One two-storey bay with an arched window is repeated at the north end of the Mt Alexander Road frontage. While most of the single-storey shops facing Napier Street retain their original shopfronts, none survive to the two-storey section.

In 1958 a new ES&A bank replaced the 1884 bank at 104 Fletcher Street. The old bank was a simple two-storey Victorian building with a posted verandah. The new building is a Modernist composition of cream brick walls and timber sash windows, with a raised volume at the corner clad in cement render ruled in large squares. The corner had wall-to-ceiling glazing around the corner, and a glazed entry facing Napier Street with black terrazzo steps. The building is intact apart from the disguising of its slender concrete canopy with large signage, and the rendering of some of the cream brick at ground floor level. The former bank now serves as a cafe.

*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/>*