Northcote Town Hall & Municipal Offices

City of Darebin Heritage
Review 2000

City of Darebin Heritage
Review 2000 (map)

Location

197-201 High Street NORTHCOTE, Darebin City

Municipality

DAREBIN CITY

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO97

Heritage Listing

Darebin City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

The Northcote Town Hall and Municipal Offices are of considerable local historical, social and architectural significance.

Construction of the original 1888-91 building is associated with the period of suburban expansion of the municipality in the late nineteenth century. Externally the building is a largely intact nineteenth century town hall and, like many other town halls, the building possesses considerable landmark qualities in the local area,

dominating the Northcote hill precinct. The ambitious architectural character of the original Johnson design reflects the civic aspirations of the Shire of Northcote at the time, deriving considerable distinction from its scale and exuberant Second Empire style. The subsequent expansion of the building reflects the growth of the suburb and the role of local government.

The town hall continues to provide a community focus for civic activity. The building has important social significance because of its role since 1888 as the focus of local government in Northcote.

The building is one of six town hall buildings designed by prominent architect George R Johnson and even without the intended clock tower it is one of the more significant works completed to his design. While extensively altered internally the fabric of the original nineteenth century building is still evident in many areas, contributing to the building's significance. The original 1890 and later 1926 redecoration of the town hall were undertaken by the prominent decorator J Ross Anderson, and the 1930 renovations were designed by architect Harry Norris.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Darebin - Darebin Heritage Review, Andrew Ward, 2000;
Hermes Number	24142
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

The Northcote Town Hall and Municipal Offices comprises two main sections: the original building facing High Street, constructed in two stages between 1888 and 1891 originally containing the council chamber, offices, court house and post and telegraph office, and the 1912 addition facing Westbourne Grove, containing the new town hall offices. The two-storey rendered brick building is in a French Second Empire style, commonly used in Australia for public buildings in the nineteenth century.

The High Street building has a symmetrical facade comprising three pedimented projecting pavilions connected at ground floor level by an arcade. The facade is articulated by superimposed Corinthian and Doric pilasters and is highly modelled and richly decorated with vermiculated rusted bands, diaper patterned panels above windows, panelled and moulded piers and moulded archivolts. Ground floor windows have segmented arched heads and cast iron colonettes, a typical Johnson motif, whilst the first floor windows are arranged in groups of three and have semi-circular arched heads and semicircular balustraded balconettes. The exuberant style and plasticity of the design contrasts with Johnson's comparatively more severe town halls at Fitzroy and Collingwood. Alterations include the loss of all the parapet urns and the painting of the render. The lamp brackets on the facade appear to date from the c1930s.

The 1912 Westbourne Grove addition continues the pedimented pavilion and arcaded design but with simplified classical detailing.

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/