

## GMH FISHERMANS BEND



GMH - Social Centre - 2019



GMH Fishermans Bend mural 1a



GMH Fishermans Bend - mural 2a



GMH Fishermans Bend - Parts Building - 2019



GMH Fishermans Bend - Plant 3 western elevation - 2019



GMH Fishermans Bend - c 1938



GMH Fishermans Bend - Plant 3 interior - 1945



GMH Fishermans Bend - c 1938



GMH Fishermans Bend - Plant 3 Interior - 1950



GMH Fishermans Bend - Administration Building Interior - c 1938



GMH Fishermans Bend - Social Centre during launch of Holden 48-215 - 1948



GMH Fishermans Bend - Prime Minister Ben Chifley at launch of Holden 48-215 at Fishermans Bend - 1948

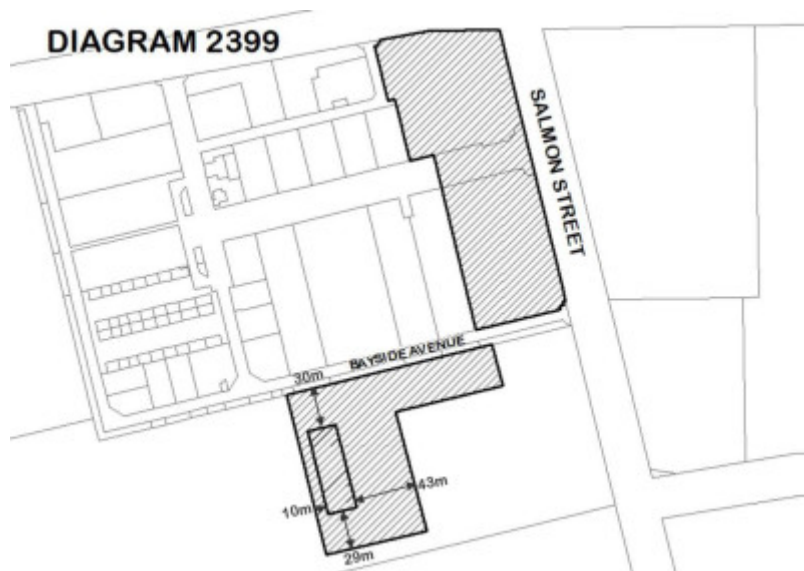


DIAGRAM 2399

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### Location

223-261 SALMON STREET PORT MELBOURNE, MELBOURNE CITY

### Municipality

MELBOURNE CITY

### Level of significance

Registered

### Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2399

### VHR Registration

September 1, 2021

### Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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### Statement of Significance

Last updated on - February 23, 2023

#### What is significant?

The GMH Fishermans Bend complex including the Parts Building, Administration Building, part of Plant 3 and the Social Centre. The two 'History of Transport' murals painted on boards and attached either side of the stage in

the Social Centre are objects integral to the significance of the place.

### **How is it significant?**

GMH Fishermans Bend is of historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

#### Criterion A

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

#### Criterion D

Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects.

### **Why is it significant?**

GMH Fishermans Bend is significant at the State level for the following reasons:

GMH Fishermans Bend is historically significant as one of Victoria's most important automotive manufacturing facilities, being instrumental in the development of the industry in the State. It was the Australian headquarters of major automotive manufacturer, General Motors-Holden's Ltd, from 1936 and is emblematic of the optimism and expansion of automotive manufacture in this period. GMH Fishermans Bend made valuable contributions to Australia's war effort, demonstrated by Plant 3 which provided for increased volume and sophistication required of manufacturing during this period. GMH Fishermans Bend was instrumental in the development of the Holden 48-215, Australia's first locally made, mass-produced car. The Social Centre was constructed in 1945 to accommodate the expanding workforce and the murals in the Social Centre, depicting the progress of transport, demonstrate the forward-thinking vision of the company in this period. Plant 3 was used for functions associated with the development of the Holden 48-215. Prime Minister Ben Chifley launched the Holden 48-215 at a ceremony held at the Social Centre in November 1948. This event was a major step in the development of Victoria's and Australia's manufacturing capacity, signalling that Australia had achieved a level of industrial sophistication and independence. [Criterion A]

The GMH Fishermans Bend is architecturally significant as a notable example of an automotive factory complex. It demonstrates the principal characteristics of the class through its variety of buildings types which are indicative of their former uses, including the landmark corporate buildings, quality staff facilities for a sizeable workforce and manufacturing areas. The variety of buildings demonstrates important phases in the expansion of GMH and their manufacturing capacity. The Administration Building, Parts Building and Social Centre are notable examples of Moderne-style architecture in Victoria. [Criterion D]

## **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:**

### **PREAMBLE**

It is recommended that any proposed works be discussed with an officer of Heritage Victoria prior to making a permit application. Discussing proposed works will assist in answering questions the owner may have and aid any decisions regarding works to the place.

**The extent of registration of GMH Fishermans Bend in the VHR affects the whole place shown on Diagram 2399 including the land, all buildings (exteriors and interiors), roads, trees, landscape elements and other features.** Under the *Heritage Act 2017* a person must not remove or demolish, damage or despoil, develop or alter or excavate, relocate or disturb the position of any part of a registered place or object without approval. It is acknowledged, however, that alterations and other works may be required to keep places and objects in good repair and adapt them for use into the future.

If a person wishes to undertake works or activities in relation to a registered place or registered object, they must apply to the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria for a permit. The purpose of a permit is to enable appropriate change to a place and to effectively manage adverse impacts on the cultural heritage significance of a place as a consequence of change. If an owner is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that Heritage Victoria be contacted.

Permits are required for anything which alters the place or object, unless a **permit exemption** is granted. Permit exemptions usually cover routine maintenance and upkeep issues faced by owners as well as minor works or works to the elements of the place or object that are not significant. They may include appropriate works that are specified in a conservation management plan. Permit exemptions can be granted at the time of registration (under s.38 of the Heritage Act) or after registration (under s.92 of the Heritage Act). It should be noted that the addition of new buildings to the registered place, as well as alterations to the interior and exterior of existing buildings requires a permit, unless a specific permit exemption is granted.

### **Conservation Management Plans**

It is recommended that a Conservation Management Plan is developed to manage the place in a manner which respects its cultural heritage significance.

### **Aboriginal cultural heritage**

If works are proposed which have the potential to disturb or have an impact on Aboriginal cultural heritage it is necessary to contact Aboriginal Victoria to ascertain any requirements under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*. If any Aboriginal cultural heritage is discovered or exposed at any time it is necessary to immediately contact Aboriginal Victoria to ascertain requirements under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*.

### **Other approvals**

Please be aware that approval from other authorities (such as local government) may be required to undertake works.

### **Archaeology**

Any works that may affect historical archaeological features, deposits or artefacts at the place is likely to require a permit, permit exemption or consent. Advice should be sought from the Archaeology Team at Heritage Victoria.

### **Cultural heritage significance**

#### **Overview of significance**

The cultural heritage significance of GMH Fishermans Bend lies in the GMH factory complex, including buildings and other features that relate to the development of GMH and the automotive industry in Victoria in the 1930s and 1940s. The Administration Building, Parts Building, Social Centre, part of Plant 3, and original low fence along Salmon Street are of primary heritage significance. The new warehouse building at the rear of the Parts Building and the recycling compound to the south of the Social Centre are of no cultural heritage significance.

## **EXEMPTED WORKS OR ACTIVITIES (PERMIT EXEMPTIONS)**

Exemptions from the need for a permit under the *Heritage Act 2017* for categories of works and activities that may be carried out in relation to places and objects in the Register can be granted at the time of registration (under s.49(3) of the Heritage Act). Exemptions from the need for a permit under the Act for categories of works and activities in relation to places and objects can also be applied for and granted after registration (under s.92 of the Heritage Act).

Under s.49(3) of the *Heritage Act 2017*, the following permit exemptions are not considered to cause harm to the cultural heritage significance of GMH Fishermans Bend.

### **General Condition 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 Condition 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 Condition 3**

All works should ideally be informed by Conservation Management Plans prepared for the place. The Executive Director is not bound by any Conservation Management Plan, and permits still must be obtained for works suggested in any Conservation Management Plan.

### **General Condition 4**

Nothing in this determination prevents the Heritage Council from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.

### **General Condition 5**

Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the relevant responsible authority, where applicable.

## **Specific Permit Exemptions**

### **All buildings of primary significance**

#### *Exteriors*

- Painting of previously painted surfaces in the same colour, finish and type provided preparation or painting does not remove or alter earlier paint finishes or other decorative schemes.
- Minor patching, repair and maintenance which replaces like with like without large-scale removal of or damage to the existing fabric or the large-scale introduction of new materials. Repairs must maximise protection and retention of fabric and include the conservation of existing details or elements. Any new materials used for repair must not exacerbate the decay of existing fabric due to chemical incompatibility, obscure existing fabric or limit access to existing fabric for future maintenance.
- Removal, replacement or upgrading of existing air conditioning systems, water and sewerage systems, security systems, ducting, wiring, antennae, aerials etc.
- Removal or replacement of existing external signage provided the size, location and material remains the same.
- Maintenance, replacement, removal and installation of electrical and fire services and security lighting.

#### *Interiors*

- Painting of previously painted walls, ceilings and other elements in the same colour, finish and type provided that preparation or painting does not remove or alter evidence of earlier paint or other decorative schemes. No unpainted timberwork is to be painted.
- Removal of paint from originally unpainted or oiled surfaces including ceilings, joinery, doors, architraves and skirtings by non-abrasive methods.
- Installation, removal or replacement of safety devices such as smoke detectors, alarms, emergency lights, exit signs, luminaires and the like.

- Installation, removal or replacement of carpets and/or flexible floor coverings, window dressings, and devices for mounting artworks and noticeboards.
- Replacement of existing services such as cabling, plumbing, electrical wiring and fire services that uses existing routes, conduits or voids, and does not involve damage to or the removal of significant fabric.
- Installation of plant within the roof space, providing that it does not impact on the external appearance of the building or involve structural changes.
- Installation, removal or replacement of bulk insulation in the roof space.

### **Administration Building and Parts Building**

All the permit exemptions for buildings of primary significance, plus:

- All non-structural works to the interiors. Any substantial 1930s fabric, fixtures or fittings uncovered while undertaking works to the interior are not included in this permit exemption.

### **New warehouse at rear of Parts Building**

All the permit exemptions for buildings and features of primary cultural heritage significance, plus:

#### *Exterior*

- All works and alterations to the existing building where they are within the existing building footprint and envelope and do not impact on 1930s fabric. If the building is to be demolished a permit may be required where building fabric intersects with the 1930s fabric. This permit exemption does not include construction of new buildings.

#### *Interior*

- All works to the interior.

### **Recycling compound to the south of the Social Centre**

- Demolition or removal of the structures forming the former ELT (Engine Test Lab) yard to the south of the Social Centre (most recently used for sorting of recyclables and the storage of bins and forklifts) including the northern brick wall and canopy structures.

### **Soil and groundwater investigations**

- Soil and groundwater investigations associated with soil and groundwater clean-up activities provided that the investigations are carried out in a manner that does not cause harm to buildings of primary significance.

### **Landscape**

- The processes of gardening, including mowing, removal of dead shrubs and replanting, disease and weed control, and maintenance to care for existing plants.
- Repairs and maintenance to existing hard landscape elements such as paths, steps, gutters, car parking areas, driveways and road ways.
- Installation, removal or maintenance to features required for car park operations such as bollards, speed humps, wheel stops and boom gates.
- Subsurface works involving the installation, removal or replacement of watering and drainage systems or other services provided there are no visible above ground elements. Landscaping, paving etc. is to be returned like for like on the completion of works.
- Erecting new signage, and repairing and maintaining existing signage (directional signage, road signs, speed signs). Signage must be located and of a size which does not obscure or damage heritage fabric, and must be able to be later removed without causing damage to significant fabric. The development of signage must be consistent in the use of format, text, logos, themes and other display materials. New signage must not be illuminated. Note: Interpretive signage requires a permit.

- Management and maintenance of established trees and shrubs including formative and remedial pruning, removal of deadwood, pest and disease control.
- The removal of dead or dangerous trees and emergency tree works to maintain safety.
- Removal of cyclone wire fencing.
- Vegetation protection and management of possums and vermin.

## Public Safety and Security

- The erection of temporary security fencing, scaffolding, hoardings or alarm and surveillance systems to prevent unauthorised access or secure public safety which will not adversely affect the significant fabric of the place provided that temporary structures are removed within 12 months of erection.
- General maintenance for the purposes of safety and security including the removal of broken glass, the temporary shuttering of windows and covering of holes providing this work is reversible.
- Works or activities, including emergency stabilisation, necessary to secure safety in an emergency where a structure or part of a structure has been irreparably damaged or destabilised and poses a safety risk to its users or the public. It is acknowledged that in some instances additional damage to significant fabric may be required to stabilise and make safe. In these instances every attempt must be made to conserve and retain as much significant fabric as possible. The Executive Director, Heritage Victoria, must be notified within seven days of the commencement of these works or activities.

## Theme

3. Connecting Victorians by transport and communications 5. Building Victoria's industries and workforce 7. Governing Victorians

Construction dates	1936,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place, Registered object integral to a registered place,
Other Names	GMH ADMINISTRATION BUILDING AND SOCIAL CENTRE, GENERAL MOTORS HOLDEN ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, GENERAL MOTORS-HOLDEN FISHERMANS BEND, FISHERMENS BEND, FISHERMANS BEND,
Hermes Number	2882
Property Number	

## History

### Fishermans Bend

In the early years of the establishment of Melbourne, Fishermans Bend described the area formed by a sharp bend in the Yarra River close to its mouth at Port Phillip Bay. With the construction of the Coode Canal in the 1880s, the sharp bend was lost but the area continued to be known as Fishermans Bend. It remained Crown land and developed slowly. In the 1920s and 1930s its proximity to the Yarra, Port Phillip Bay and central Melbourne made it attractive to heavy industry, including GMH. The area played a key role in manufacturing during World War II, including at GMH and the nearby Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation factory. Many women were employed in factories at Fishermans Bend during this time and made major contributions to the war effort. Industrial activity grew significantly after World War II, employing a large number of post-war migrants, particularly from the nearby Fishermans Bend Migrant Hostel.

### Holden/General Motors/General Motors-Holden

James Alexander Holden established a leather and saddlery business in Adelaide in the 1850s. In 1919, a new

company, Holden's Motor Body Builders Limited, was formed to meet the demand for car bodies for the early Australian car industry. At that time, the Australian automotive industry assembled complete cars using Australian made bodies and imported chassis and mechanical parts. Major US automotive manufacturers General Motors established a presence in Australia in 1926. In 1931, General Motors and Holden's Motor Body Builders Ltd merged to become General MotorsHolden's Ltd. After a period of decline during the Depression, Laurence Hartnett was appointed Managing Director and, alongside managers such as John Storey, successfully expanded the company. During the 1930s, major GMH manufacturing facilities could be found in Victoria, South Australia, New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia. The company expanded again during World War II, taking on numerous Commonwealth contracts. By 1940, all Australian GMH plants were dedicated to wartime manufacture and the company made important advances in manufacturing capacity. In 1954, GMH entered the export market. Iconic models such as the Kingswood, Monaro and Commodore followed in the 1960s and 1970s. Reduced tariff protection and increased popularity of imports led to the gradual reduction of Holden manufacturing in the latter decades of the twentieth century. In late 2013, Holden announced that all Australian manufacturing plants would close by 2017.

### **Establishment of GMH Fishermans Bend**

In the early 1930s, GMH in Victoria was located on City Road in South Melbourne. In 1935, they announced their intention to purchase 50 acres of Crown land in Fishermans Bend for a new manufacturing plant and national headquarters. The area selected was in a key location close to river and road transport. Site layout and building designs were completed by a team within GMH. The complex consisted of the Administration Building which housed the national headquarters of the company in Australia and the Victorian sales office; the Parts Building which provided the office and warehouse for the Australian parts area of the company; Plant 1 for the assembly of vehicle bodies (demolished) and Plant 2 (demolished) for the manufacture of vehicle bodies. The largest was Plant 1 which lay to the west behind the Administration Building and had a floor area of over 30,000 square metres. The new factory complex was opened by Prime Minister Lyons on 5 November 1936.

### **GMH Fishermans Bend during wartime**

The build-up and outbreak of World War II necessitated the rapid expansion of Australia's manufacturing capacity and sophistication. By 1940 all GMH plants in Australia were dedicated to Commonwealth contracts. Dozens of projects were undertaken at Fishermans Bend. Production included the Gray diesel engine and torpedo engines. Plant 3 and a foundry (demolished) were added to the south of Plant 1 to accommodate wartime manufacturing. Many women were employed at the GMH factory in Fishermans Bend during this time and made major contributions to the war effort. The Social Centre opened in 1945. It could seat over 500 people and foreshadowed the expansion of post-war manufacturing. GMH employee Eileen Robertson painted murals depicting the progress of transport for the opening of the Social Centre. Robertson was an artist employed in the GMH Public Relations Division at Fishermans Bend. She was the recipient of a National Gallery Travelling Scholarship and studied at the Royal Academy in London before commencing work at GMH.

### **The Holden 48-215 (the FX Holden)**

An entirely Australian produced car had been a priority for Hartnett and others at GMH since the mid-1930s. During World War II, GMH had made important advances in the sophistication and capacity of their manufacturing and developed the resources to pursue the project. The Commonwealth government supported the concept of an all-Australian car in the final years of World War II and favoured GMH's plan. General Motors elected to design and prototype the car in the United States, with assistance from Australian GMH engineers. At Fishermans Bend, Plant 3 housed engineering and toolroom facilities and Plant 5 was constructed to accommodate production of engines for the car. The bodies of the first cars were produced at Adelaide's Woodville plant. In 1948 the first 'all-Australian' car, the Holden 48-215 (also known as the FX), was produced on the assembly line at the Fishermans Bend plant. The new car was displayed at an employee open day at the Fishermans Bend plant on 21 November 1948. The Holden 48-215 was officially launched by Prime Minister Chifley at an event held at the Social Centre on 29 November 1948. The car proved popular with consumers and it provided the basis for subsequent models such as the FJ Holden.

### **Development of GMH Fishermans Bend post-1950**

The factory complex continued to expand as the FX and subsequent models increased in popularity. GMH Fishermans Bend became a major employer of post-war migrants, including those from the nearby Fishermans Bend Migrant Hostel. In the 1950s, GMH established a new assembly plant in Dandenong and the Fishermans Bend plant concentrated on component manufacture. A Technical Centre, designed by Stephenson & Turner, was added to the east end of Plant 3 in 1964. Manufacturing areas continued to be added to the west and south of the site throughout the second half of the twentieth century. At its largest, the site occupied approximately 38



hectares. In the early 2000s, Plant 1 was demolished and the Administration and Parts Buildings were sold. In 2015, Holden announced it would begin selling off portions of the site. They continue to maintain a presence in Fishermans Bend, and currently occupy leased areas within the recommended extent of registration.

## **KEY REFERENCES USED TO PREPARE ASSESSMENT**

### **Articles and periodicals**

"The Melbourne Plant of General Motors-Holden's Limited" *Building* Vol. 59 No. 350 (1936)

GMH, *General Motors World*

GMH, *People*

GMH, *Pointers*

GMH, *War Record* (1946)

### **Reports**

Biosis (2017) *Southbank and Fishermans Bend Heritage Review*

Context (2017) *Life on the Bend: A Social History of Fishermans Bend, Melbourne*

Lardner, Helen & Mills, Peter *Former GMH Complex Fishermans Bend Draft Report*

### **Books**

Darwin, Norm (1983) *The History of Holden since 1917*

Darwin, Norm (2017) *Early Australian Automotive Design: the first fifty years 1895-1953*

Edquist, Harriet and Hurlston, David (2015) *Shifting Gear: Design, Innovation and the Australian Car*

GMH (1980) *Holden: the first 25 years*

Grow, Robin (2009) *Melbourne Art Deco*

### **Websites**

'1951 Holden 48-215 (FX) Standard Sedan 2019', Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences

'GMH Social Centre, Fishermen's Bend' <<a href="http://artdecobuildings.blogspot.com/2008/07/gmh-social-centre-fishermens-bend.html">http://artdecobuildings.blogspot.com/2008/07/gmh-social-centre-fishermens-bend.html<>

'Hartnett, Sir Laurence John (1898–1986)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*,

'Holden is History', Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences

## **Extent of Registration**

Heritage Act 2017

## NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the Heritage Act 2017, I give notice under section 53 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by adding a place in the Heritage Register:

Number: H2399

Category: Registered Place and Registered Objects Integral to a Registered Place

Place: GMH FISHERMANS BEND

Location: 223-261 SALMON STREET, PORT MELBOURNE

Municipality: CITY OF MELBOURNE

All the place shown hatched on Diagram 2399 encompassing all of Lot 1 and Lot 21 on Plan of Subdivision 300001; part of Common Property 1 on Plan of Subdivision 300001C; Part of Lot 3A on Plan of Subdivision 833585, being land bounded by a line approximately 10m from the western wall, 43m from the eastern wall, 29m from the southern wall and 30m from the northern wall of the Social Centre. This includes land forming the footprint of the northern most sawtooth roof bay and two western most structural bays of Plant 3 and objects integral to the place being two murals known as 'History of Transport' painted on boards and attached to either side of the stage in the Social Centre.

1 September 2021

STEVEN AVERY

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/>*