
Sturt Street Precinct



STURT STREET HERITAGE
PRECINCT

Municipality

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO167

Heritage Listing

Ballarat City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - March 26, 2024

What is significant?

How is it significant?

Why is it significant?

The Sturt Street Precinct is historically significant at a **LOCAL** level. (AHC criteria A3,4 and H.1).

(a) the place's importance in the course, or pattern, of Australia's natural or cultural history;

(a3) importance in exhibiting unusual richness or diversity of built landscapes and cultural features;

(a4) & (h1) 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, which mainly focuses on Sturt Street boulevard, is important for its association with William S. Urquhart, the Assistant Colonial Governor Surveyor at the time in 1851, and is an excellent example of the lasting influence of his work. It is historically important for its major contribution to the unified character of Ballarat's urban design that still retains the harmony of its foundation years.

The Precinct is historically important as it shows evidence of the creation of a grand elegant boulevard in the European tradition, within a rectilinear street layout pattern based on hierarchy and axial ordering, a neoclassical planning overlay on a once chaotic gold mining district. The geometric hierarchy was established by predetermined fixed street widths and block sizes that determined the length of streets and scale of intersections that allowed the character of each neighbourhood to change, whilst retaining the visual coherence of the whole.

The Precinct is historically important as it demonstrates the particular social structure of Ballarat during the 19th century which was conducive to a universally admired aesthetic. Sturt Street with its counterpart Victoria Street in East Ballarat, part of the former cattle stock route between Geelong and Adelaide, are the only surveyed roads in Ballarat that were substantially wider and longer than other streets. It was one of the earliest roads to have been surveyed in Ballarat and is important as the central spine of Urquhart's city plan. The Sturt Street boulevard is the focus of city design in this area as the formal western gateway to the centre of the city, and to the east, it links with the commemorative Ballarat Avenue of Honour, where between 1917-1921, over 3,000 trees were planted along the Western Highway for 22km.

The grandeur and scale of Sturt Street moderates the form and structure of the Precinct and provides the setting for many prestigious churches and institutions in the city. In this section of Sturt Street corner sites were reserved for important public buildings. There are three significant early churches of the Catholic, Anglican and Presbyterian faiths, which together with the Ballarat hospital and Fire Station have become hallmark features of the Ballarat vistas and skyline. The residential buildings and two-storey shops demonstrate the development of larger professional and commercial families' houses in the more prosperous western area of Ballarat.

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

(d) its importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of: (i) a class of Australia's Cultural places; or (ii) a class of Australia's cultural environments (including way of life, custom, process, land-use, function, design or technique);

(e) its importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group;

(f) its importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative design or artistic excellence, or technical achievement at a particular period.

The Precinct is aesthetically and architecturally significant as a fine example of broad historical townscape founded in 1850s, the product of a European city building tradition. It demonstrates many original and intact urban design and fine architectural qualities associated with the ecclesiastical, civic, commercial and residential development of the Ballarat township between the 1850s and early 1900s.

These important aesthetic and architectural qualities include but are not limited to many local landmarks, such as ecclesiastical and civic buildings and their individual precincts as well as an outstanding collection of residences. Particularly significant examples include a remarkable group of churches. These are the eclectic English Gothic styled former Congregational Church on the corner Dawson and Mair Street, designed by local architects Caselli and Figgis (1881) and Molloy and Chandler (1906 rear additions), the English Norman styled St Andrew Kirk corner Sturt and Dawson Streets designed by local architects C.D. Cuthbert (nave 1862-64), C.D.Figgis (spire 1884) Figgis and Molloy (transept 1889), the English Gothic styled Roman Catholic St Patricks Cathedral located on the opposite corner of Sturt Street, designed by English architects Hansom brothers (1857 and modified by local architects Shaw and Dowden (1857) J.B. Denny (1870) and Melbourne architects Reed Smart and Tappin (1891) as well as their associated collection of buildings, specifically St Patrick's Hall and Presbytery, the individual church precincts and fencing, the former Baptist Church at 3 Dawson Street designed by local architect

J. A. Donne (1866-67) and the Lutheran Church and Manse located at 206 Doveton Street and the Manse at 105 Eyre Street designed by C.D. Figgis as well as architect F. Poeppel (1868-1876). These European styled ecclesiastical buildings with their tall towers dominate the area and form an impressive church precinct of great architectural and heritage visual importance to the city of Ballarat. Other landmark buildings which have considerable architectural and aesthetic significance include the bluestone two-storey Ballarat City Fire Station with its lookout tower located at 702 Sturt Street designed by H.R. Figgis in 1859, as well as the elegant neo-classic residences at 18-20 Lyons Street, which is important as one of the largest and most consistent Renaissance revival terraces in the State. In addition at 606-608 Sturt Street the 19th century neo-classic town house is an excellent example of the Grecian revival style. Further outstanding Italianate style residences are located at 704 Sturt Street which forms part of an important group of doctor's houses, amongst others.

The Precinct is architecturally important for its range of fine examples of Victorian and Federation styled buildings displaying many eclectic architectural motifs such as Jacobean, Gothic and Tudor detailing. The residential and commercial buildings are generally one to two storeys, with civic buildings contrasting in height and scale. The main civic buildings are unique in design and scale but are consistent in their use of stone for construction.

With respect to the gracious Sturt Street boulevard layout and landscaped central median strip with memorial, fountain and statues the landscape setting contributes to the overall architectural qualities of the streetscape, and demonstrates important aesthetic visual qualities that reflect the historical, cultural and architectural development of the Precinct, and contribute to the historic context of Ballarat.

The Sturt Street Precinct is **scientifically** significant at a **LOCAL** level (AHC criteria C.2).

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

The Precinct is of importance for contributing to the history of infrastructure development in Ballarat West, identified by intact bluestone kerbs and gutters and cast iron drinking fountain.

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

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

Sturt Street is recognized and highly valued by the community for religious, civic, commercial, commemorative, and cultural reasons.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Ballarat - Ballarat Heritage Precincts Study, Dr David Rowe and Wendy Jacobs, 2006;
Hermes Number	140660
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

The Sturt Street Precinct is characterised by a combination of substantially intact residential buildings constructed generally from the 1870s to the 1940s, and by a notable collection of civic and religious buildings constructed from the 1860s onwards. The precinct is also characterised by the formal layout and mature tree plantings of Sturt Street.

The Sturt Street precinct includes the roadway and all properties fronting Sturt Street between Pleasant and Dawson Streets. Developments associated with St. Patrick's Cathedral complex (Hall and Presbytery), St. Andrew's Uniting Church (hall and gardens) and the Ballarat Base Hospital are also included.

The Sturt Street precinct extends from Dawson Street to Pleasant Street and includes the roadway and all the properties fronting Sturt Street.

Sturt Street was known as Raglan Road and was primarily part of the three chain stock route between Geelong and Adelaide. Development commenced in the precinct after the first survey undertaken in 1852, which laid out Sturt Street as a cross over street. It is possible that the street was named after Evelyn Pitfield Shirley Sturt, brother of Charles Sturt.

By the end of the 1850's Sturt Street began to compete with Main Road for business importance and work began to improve the visual state of the streetscape. A dual roadway was developed with a central mudbank. The mudbank was planted with Tasmanian Bluegums grown from seed given to the City by Baron von Mueller. However, after complaints from shopkeepers that the trees shaded their shops in winter, the gums were replanted with elms and oaks. The median strip continues to feature mature trees and landscaping and is still used for recreation and commemorative events.

The precinct shows the consolidation of the township from the centre of the city towards west Ballarat and the important role Sturt street played in the commercial, civic, medical, religious and cultural life of Ballarat.

The precinct is architecturally important as it contains many original Victorian and Federation civic, commercial and residential buildings. These include the key landmark buildings such as the St Patrick's and St Andrew's Cathedrals and their associated buildings, Ballarat Fire Station, Ballarat Base Hospital and three doctors residences at 704, 708 and 802 Sturt Street. Other visual features are the gracious boulevard form of Sturt Street with its landscaped gardens and mature trees, the memorials and sculptures and the unobstructed views between the street and the abutting buildings.

The precinct also retains the early bluestone gutters and kerbing.

Typically, buildings are generally two storey, although some residences are 1 - 1 ½ story, are either brick or horizontal weatherboard, with verandahs or articulated facades, hipped and /or gabled roofs. Buildings also show substantial architectural decorative detailing and the commercial and some residential buildings are built onto the street frontage.

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/>