

HORSHAM TOWN HALL



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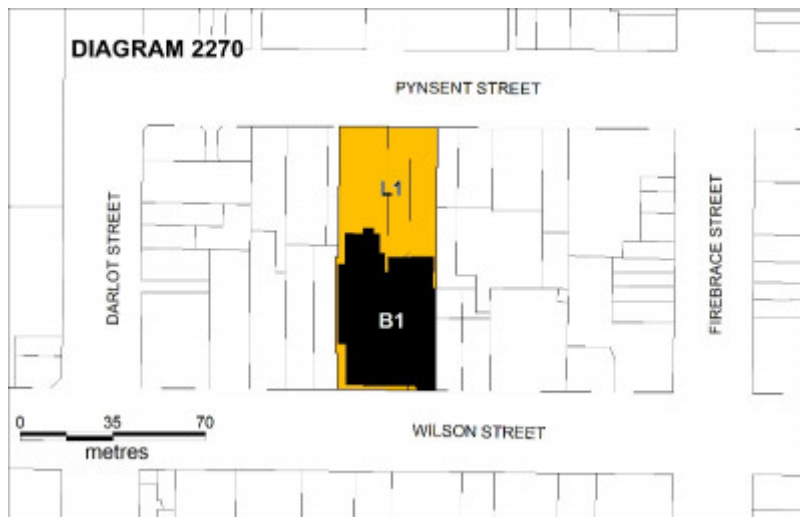
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horsham town hall plan.jpg

Location

78 WILSON STREET HORSHAM, HORSHAM RURAL CITY

Municipality

HORSHAM RURAL CITY

Level of significance

Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2279

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO28

VHR Registration

June 9, 2011

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is significant?

The Horsham Town Hall is a municipal complex built in 1938-1939 and incorporating offices and a council meeting room, an auditorium, a supper room, and an associated tenancy. It replaced an earlier complex, with offices of 1886 and a town hall of 1911. It was designed by the distinguished Melbourne architect Charles Neville Hollinshed (1899-1993), one of Australia's leading theatre designers and an expert in the interior planning and detailing of auditoria and associated spaces. The contract was given to the builder Rupert F Anderson for the sum of £6,500, and the foundation stone was laid on 21 July 1938 and the building opened on 31 May 1939. The building was one of the most important civic complexes built outside Melbourne in the inter-war period, and was the subject of a lengthy article in the *Journal of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects* in June 1939 and in the Sydney-based journal *Building* in August that year. It became the town's premier venue for public functions of all kinds, with the thousand-seat auditorium used for public events such as ceremonies, balls, wedding receptions, fashion shows, art exhibitions, conferences, concerts and trade shows. The offices were vacated in 1980 when a new civic centre opened. In 1983 the Horsham Art Gallery was established in the former offices, and extensions to the gallery designed by Heymann, Kolleger & Beyer Pty Ltd opened in 1999.

The Horsham Town Hall is a two storey brick building in a Stripped Classical style with elements of the Streamlined Moderne and with impressive and intact Art Deco interiors. The building has a facade of textured face bricks, spandrels of Hawksbury sandstone between the metal-framed windows, and darker bricks used for decorative detailing. At the front of the building are the former municipal offices with the council chamber above (now the art gallery), and at the rear are the auditorium and supper room. The former office section has a symmetrical composition, with a central entrance distinguished by the use of Hawkesbury sandstone, surmounted by a balcony and decorated with the municipal coat of arms, with sandstone lamp stands on each side and a simple wrought iron fence across the front. To the east of this main section is the entry to the town hall and an associated tenancy in a Streamlined Moderne style, with a curved corner, ornamental brickwork and banding and original light fittings. The interior retains many notable original Art Deco features, including staircases with wrought iron and Queensland maple balustrades, terrazzo floors, plaster ceilings, doors of walnut veneer with vertical inlaid strips, and original light fittings. The impressive auditorium is largely intact, with a cantilevered balcony with original seating, an ornamental plaster ceiling, original suspended lights with opalescent glazing, and vertical metal-framed windows in the side walls with bracket lighting between. The entrance vestibule to the hall is in largely original condition, with a notable feature being the original Art Deco style ticket office.

This site is part of the traditional land of the Barengi Gadjin people.

How is it significant?

The Horsham Town Hall is of architectural and historical significance to the state of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Horsham Town Hall is architecturally significant as an outstanding example of a provincial municipal building of the inter-war period, and as a notable and intact example of the Art Deco style of the late 1930s. Its grand public interiors, including the auditorium, foyers, staircases and supper room, as well as the former council meeting room, are outstanding examples of the style, notable for their moulded plasterwork, terrazzo floors and stairs, the use of anodised metal and polished timber and for the original light fittings. The auditorium is one of the most impressive such spaces in country Victoria. The complex is significant as an important work of the distinguished Melbourne architect Charles Neville Hollinshed, who, after undertaking training and practical experience in London and New York in the 1920s, returned to Australia to become in the 1930s one of the country's leading specialists in theatre design.

The Horsham Town Hall is historically significant as a reflection of the expansion of local government activities in country Victoria in the first half of the twentieth century and as an expression of the civic pride of local communities in the years prior to World War II.

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:

General Conditions: 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 Conditions: 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 Conditions: 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan all works shall be in accordance with it. Note: A Conservation Management Plan or a Heritage Action Plan provides guidance for the management of the heritage values associated with the site. It may not be necessary to obtain a heritage permit for certain works specified in the management plan. General Conditions: 4. Nothing in this determination prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions. General Conditions: 5. Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authorities where applicable. Minor Works : Note: Any Minor Works that in the opinion of the Executive Director will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the place may be exempt from the permit requirements of the Heritage Act. A

person proposing to undertake minor works must submit a proposal to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely affect the heritage values of the site, the applicant may be exempted from the requirement to obtain a heritage permit. If an applicant is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that the permits co-ordinator be contacted.

Theme

5. Building Victoria's industries and workforce 6. Building towns cities and the garden state 7. Governing Victorians

Construction dates 1938,
Architect/Designer Hollinshed, Charles Neville,
Heritage Act Categories Registered place,
Other Names HORSHAM TOWN HALL, HORSHAM TOWN HALL AND ART GALLERY,
Hermes Number 146361
Property Number

History

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

[Information from Thematic History by Charles Fahy in Andrew Ward's 'Typological Study of Local Government offices/Halls in Victoria, 1996, pp 38-43.]

Local government municipalities in Victoria had very limited roles in the nineteenth century, their main function being the construction and maintenance of roads and bridges. In rural shires they also took care of government reserves, impounding stray livestock, collected dog licences, supplied residents with water and removed their night soil. These limited roles were reflected in their small income, and in the small number of office staff employed: often only a town clerk and engineer; so large office accommodation was unnecessary. However a town hall was always an expression of the pride of the local community and was the centre of local community life.

In country areas the period from after the 1890s depression until the 1930s was marked by little or no economic growth. However by 1934 the powers of local government, and also their revenue, had increased markedly. After WWI local government became more involved in personal services, such as infant welfare and town planning. Their former accommodation in many cases was no longer suitable, and new town halls and offices were built by many councils in the 1920s and 1930s. These abandoned the conservative classical styles of the nineteenth century in favour of the latest architectural fashions.

Art Deco in Victoria

According to Robin Grow (in *Melbourne Art Deco*, 2009) Art Deco is a term inclusive of many inter-war styles, incorporating a mixture of stylistic influences and detailing. Buildings were usually of reinforced concrete but often with facings of bricks of different colours, textures and sizes. Entrance porches often emphasised the horizontal with cantilevered roofs without supporting posts. Entrances were often framed by modern reworkings of columns and with traditional forms replaced by square pillars. Stairs were often cantilevered and of terrazzo, while balustrades were of wrought iron or wood. Windows were metal-framed on most stylish buildings, and were often placed on corners, which were often curved. Flagpoles were almost always used.

Decorative detailing was important and was one of the most celebrated aspects of the style, with plaster cornices and wall panels featuring wave motifs or zigzags, stylised light fittings, adorned entrances, terrazzo floors, metal stair railings and geometric styling. Doors often included inlays of different woods with chrome or stainless steel door handles. Metalwork was used for ornamental effect, especially white metals such as chrome in interiors.

Lighting was an important design feature both internally and externally.

Art Deco was considered stylish and its modernist imagery was popular for buildings such as theatres, which generally had good acoustics and unimpeded visibility was provided by cantilevered balconies.

Few buildings from the Art Deco period remain intact.

The architect: Charles Neville Hollinshed (1899-1993)

[Information from report prepared by Simon Reeves of Built Heritage Pty Ltd for the Art Deco and Modernism Society in support of the nomination of the Horsham Town Hall for the VHR.]

Hollinshed was born in England, but his family moved to Queensland when he was a baby. He evidently began his training in Australia, as when he enlisted with the AIF in 1917 he listed his profession as 'draughtsman'. He completed his war service in London and spent six months there studying at the Architectural Association, along with other Australians such as Arthur Stephenson, Donald Turner, Nicholas Mackey and Leighton Irwin. Percy Meldrum was then teaching there. Hollinshed returned to Australia in 1919 and began the new four year architecture course at the University of Sydney, the first faculty of architecture in Australia, and in 1922 became one of its first three graduates. He moved to Melbourne and joined the office of Stephenson & Meldrum, his former colleagues from London, where he worked for about a year.

Hollinshed returned to England in 1924 and worked as a draftsman in the architectural offices of Gibson & Gordon. In 1925 he moved to New York, where he worked for a time in the offices of Thomas W Lamb, at that time the leading architect of cinema and theatres in the USA.

In 1927 Hollinshed returned to Melbourne and established his own practice. In December 1927 he married the daughter of John Tait, the prominent theatrical entrepreneur. He was for several decades the official architect to the family business, which, having merged with J C Williamson in 1920, had become the largest and most successful theatrical organisation in Australasia. He was responsible for numerous theatres and theatre upgrades in Victoria, Tasmania, Queensland, South Australia and New Zealand. His practice also carried out a broad range of other commissions, including commercial, industrial and residential projects, and garnered attention in the architectural and mainstream press.

Hollinshed was in 1956 also a foundation member of the Victorian branch of the National Trust of Australia and chairman of the management committee of the Trust property Como, and in 1982 wrote the first complete history of the Shire of Flinders (*Lime, Sands and Leisure: Peninsula History in the Shire of Flinders*).

HISTORY OF PLACE

Horsham was created a Borough in 1882, and the first purpose-built Council offices were opened in this site in 1886. A large hall was built at the rear in 1910-11. The town of Horsham was declared in 1932.

By the mid-1930s the old hall and offices were too small and structurally unsound. The Melbourne architect C N Hollinshed was in 1937 commissioned to prepare a report on a proposal to rebuild the municipal offices and town hall, and recommended that a new building was needed. He was retained to prepare plans for a project to retain and refurbish the existing hall and provide a new office block, and in March 1938 called tenders for 'the erection of new municipal offices and alterations to the Town Hall'. However the structure of the old town hall proved to be unsound, and Hollinshed prepared plans for an entirely new 1000-seat auditorium. In July 1938 a contract for the new hall was awarded to the builder Rupert F Anderson, for the sum of £6,500, and the foundation stone for the new complex was laid on 21 July 1938 by the Mayor, Cr James Barnes.

Hollinshed had made a name as a principal architect for J C Williamson. He had designed the Regent Theatres in Brisbane (1929), Palmerston North (New Zealand) (1930) and Fitzroy, and the Comedy, Mayfair and Village Theatres in Melbourne. While practising with A H Walkley he had designed the auditorium and lobbies of Her Majesty's Theatre, Melbourne (1934) in the Art Deco style. In was a member of the RVIA's Street Architecture Medal jury from 1940 to 1942.

Hollinshed's design was an amalgam of architectural styles of the 1930s, reflecting the influences of European brick modernism, stripped classicism, the Streamlined Moderne and Art Deco, especially in the interiors.

Completion of the building was delayed by a fire in January 1939 which damaged the auditorium roof and destroying the ceiling, which cost £10,000 to right. The building was said in the *Horsham Times* (10 March 1939)

to be the best municipal complex outside Melbourne. Council staff occupied the new municipal offices in March 1939 and the opening ceremony took place on 31 May 1939. It was the subject of a lavishly illustrated multi-page spread in the June 1939 issue of the *Journal of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects* (pp 138 ff). In August 1939 there was an illustrated two-page article in the Sydney-based journal, *Building* (pp 48-9).

The new hall became an integral part of the life of Horsham and the town's premier venue for public events, performances and social gatherings. It was used for ceremonies, balls, wedding receptions, fashion shows, art exhibitions, conferences and trade shows. The auditorium was regularly used for concerts by local and international musicians, and hosted performances by the National Ballet and the Victorian Symphony Orchestra. From the 1970s it became increasingly popular for concerts by well-known rock music groups on regional tours.

Horsham was declared a City in 1949 and as the responsibilities of Council expanded, the capacity of the offices to meet its needs diminished and a decision was taken to build a new Civic Centre, which opened in 1980. The old offices were vacated and in 1983 the Horsham Art Gallery was established in the former offices. Extensions to the gallery designed by Heymann, Kollegger & Beyer Pty Ltd were opened in May 1999.

Assessment Against Criteria

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

The Horsham Town Hall is a reflection of the expansion of local government activities in country Victoria in the first half of the twentieth century and an expression of the civic pride of local communities in the years prior to World War II.

b. Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history.

c. Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's cultural history.

d. Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places or environments.

The Horsham Town Hall is an outstanding example of a provincial municipal building of the inter-war period, and a notable and intact example of the Art Deco style of the late 1930s. Its grand public interiors, including the auditorium, foyers, staircases and supper room, as well as the former council meeting room, are outstanding examples of the style, notable for their moulded plasterwork, terrazzo floors and stairs, the use of anodised metal and polished timber and for the original light fittings. The auditorium is one of the most impressive such spaces in country Victoria.

e. Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.

f. Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.

g. Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions.

h. Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Victoria's history.

The Horsham Town Hall is an important work of the distinguished Melbourne architect Charles Neville Hollinshed, who, after undertaking training and practical experience in London and New York in the 1920s, returned to Australia to become in the 1930s one of the country's leading specialists in theatre design.

Plaque Citation

Built in 1938-9 to designs by the architect Charles Hollinshed, this is an outstanding example of an Inter-war Stripped Classical style municipal building, notable for its impressive Art Deco interiors.

Extent of Registration

1. All the land marked L1 on Diagram 2279 held by the Executive Director, being all of the land described in Certificates of Title Volume 6156 Folio 058, Volume 4753 Folio 478, Volume 3890 Folio 903, Volume 4753 Folio 477, Volume 1651 Folio 127 and Volume 5606 Folio 052.
2. All the building marked B1 on Diagram 2279 held by the 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/>