
Church Street North Precinct



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Location

94-147 & 156-178 CHURCH STREET, RICHMOND, YARRA CITY

Municipality

YARRA CITY

Level of significance

Recommended for Heritage Overlay

Heritage Listing

Yarra City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is significant?

The Church Street North Precinct, comprising 97-147 and 156-178 Church Street, Richmond. On the east side, the precinct extends northward from the Highett Street intersection, and southward on the west side. The precinct primarily comprises commercial buildings of the 1860s to 1880s, including shops and a concentration of hotels. There are also a few bi-chrome brick houses of the same era, one with a rare two-storey rear wing (No. 99). The precinct is largely intact to its 19th-century form.

Contributory elements include one and two-storey Victorian-era shops and residences:

- Most with living accommodation located on the upper level or at the rear,
- Configured as continuous building rows with no front or side boundary setbacks;
- Typically parapeted in form with concealed pitched roofs;

- Typically with vertically oriented rectangular openings, symmetrically arranged, to the upper level facades;
- Typically with stuccoed facades having simple ornamentation and trabeation derived from Italian Renaissance architecture and also the Edwardian-era (pressed red brick) bakehouses;
- Once typically with post-supported street verandahs, timber and iron construction, with cantilever awnings for 20th century buildings;
- Once typically with large display windows at ground level, with recessed tiled or stone paved entries, also some metal framed (brass, copper) shopfronts for early 20th century buildings.

Contributory elements also include:

- Traditional street elements such as bluestone pitcher crossings, kerbs, and gutters, cast-iron grates, and asphalt footpaths.

The Victorian-era hotels at Nos. 135 and 164, and the shop at No. 178 are Individually Significant. The Andrewartha Showroom (No. 115) is Individually Significant, but does not contribute to the significance of the precinct. The vacant lot at 139 Church Street is Not Contributory. At 125 Church Street, the shop itself is Not Contributory, but the red-brick bakehouse behind it is Contributory.

How it is significant?

The Church Street North Precinct is of local historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Yarra.

Why it is significant?

Historically, it is a tangible illustration of one of Richmond's earliest shopping strips, which developed primarily between 1860 and the 1880s. Its importance at this time is demonstrated by the concentration of four former or existing hotels in a small area, which served as key community hubs during the 19th century. It was eclipsed by Bridge Road once a cable tram line began to run on that street in 1885, but continued to serve the local community. (Criterion A)

The precinct is representative as a visually coherent and largely intact grouping of mid-Victorian commercial buildings - shops, shop-residences, and hotels - dating from the 1860s to 1880s. They illustrate typical features of this era including stuccoed facades, parapets concealing hipped roofs, and Italianate details. (Criterion D)

Heritage Study/Consultant	Yarra - Heritage Gaps Study: Review of remaining 17 heritage precincts from the 2009 Gaps report, Context Pty Ltd, 2013;
Hermes Number	162824
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

This largely commercial precinct is located around the Church and Highett streets intersection with a dense and coherent streetscape on the east side of Church Street between Highett and Lt Buckingham streets, and a smaller collection on the west side, focussed around Highett Street. The precinct borders on the early residential subdivision around Kent and Somerset streets and in addition to the mainly mid-Victorian-era commercial buildings there is some contiguous and contemporary residential development that contributes to the period expression.

The precinct character is typically two-storey with a parapeted street facade with splayed corner entries. There is also a row of single-storey shops, between Highett and Somerset streets. No. 137, on the corner of Somerset Street, has an early form with a high hip roof partially hidden behind a simple parapet, and appears to date from the 1860s or early 1870s. It is rendered, with traces of ochre-colour limewash below the parapet.

A two-storey parapeted shop row occupies the north corner with Kent St, with the south corner occupied by the Prince of Wales Hotel (109 Church Street). Another two early hotels are the former Queens Arms (No. 133) and Bristol hotels (No. 135), sited at or near the corner of Somerset Street. The Bristol Hotel, which is Individually Significant, has a well proportioned and detailed elevation to Somerset Street with banded rustication, quoins and finely worked bluestone base. These buildings are echoed in the former Naughton's Hotel at the south-west Highett Street corner (No. 164, Individually Significant).

There are three buildings of similar form, having two-storeys and a parapeted, gable-end roof. Two of them, at 123-125 and 137 Church Street, are set back behind shops, were constructed c1900 of pressed red brick, and served as bakehouses for the first half of the 20th century. A similar building, at No. 156, sits at the front of its allotment, and appears to have been built first as a shop.

Further south is the significant former James Lentell building, at 178 Church Street (Individually Significant). Designed with Tudor stylistic characteristics, the building has diamond pattern brick-panels and window-spandrels, with incised render-decoration on the facade and an intact timber shopfront, with splayed entry, with glazed doors.

Most of the two-storey shops have modern shopfronts, as is typical for commercial buildings of this era, but have intact first-floor facades. The row of three, two-storey shops at Nos. 103-107 have replacement first-floor windows, as well, but all retain cast decoration above the windows, balloons along the parapet, and a Dutch-influenced pediment above the chamfered corner. The James Lentell Building (No. 178), and possibly the c1860s shop at No. 137, is the only shop to retain its original shopfront, though the hotels have generally retained intact ground floors or at least the original door and window openings. Apart from the shops at Nos. 103-107 and 178, the Victorian-era shops and hotels are restrained in their decoration, as was common prior to the Boom era of the late 1880s.

Houses in the precinct include a terrace of three Victorian bichrome brick houses at the north end (Nos. 99-103). The central one retains an early or original two-storey rear wing, which is a rare building type, also seen at 63-71 Church Street (in a separate, individual HO). At the southern end, No. 176 is a single-storey bichrome Victorian house, highly intact apart from overpainting of the cream brick accents. As they are smaller in scale than most of the shops and set back behind small front gardens, the houses are a recessive element in the precinct, but are a typical inclusion in a small, local shopping strip.

On the north-west corner of Highett Street is the former James Jones general store that has also been used as a motor garage by the Mather family: this has a Victorian-era gabled form that relates to the precinct but has been altered. There are two other two-storey brick buildings with parapeted end gables quite similar to this one at the rear of Nos. 125 and 137.

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/>