

# FORMER COCKATOO KINDERGARTEN



Coakatoo\_Kindergarten\_Aug\_2



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After Photograph - Reference  
F3896 2016



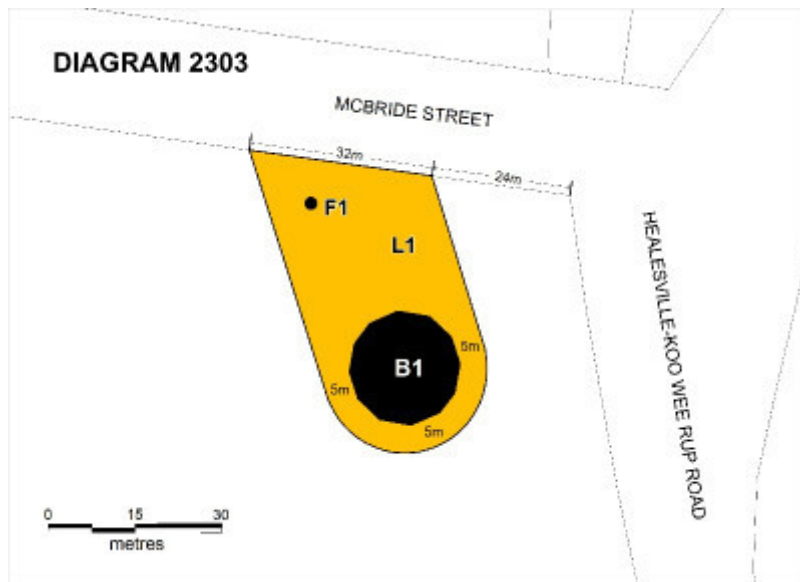
After Photograph - Reference  
F3896 2016



After Photograph - Reference  
F3896 2016



Before Photograph -  
Reference F3896 2014



cockatoo plan.jpg

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## Location

2-10 MCBRIDE STREET COCKATOO, CARDINIA SHIRE

## Municipality

CARDINIA SHIRE

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2303

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO274

## VHR Registration

May 10, 2012

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is significant?

The former Cockatoo Kindergarten is a 1976 kindergarten building in a semi-rural setting in the township of Cockatoo, about 50 km east of Melbourne. The site is part of the traditional land of the Kulin Nation.

The former Cockatoo Kindergarten is located in the Alma Trelour Reserve. It is a steel-framed circular building with a low pyramidal roof tapering up to a central lantern, which provides light and ventilation, and has a surrounding verandah. Internally it had a large play room, office and toilet facilities. The exterior walls of the building, originally of asbestos sheeting with large areas of glass, have been removed, and some of the internal walls have also been destroyed.

The kindergarten was built to provide facilities for the then rapidly growing population, on land provided by the local Council, using money raised by the Cockatoo Community Co-operative. The circular-plan building was designed by the Melbourne architect Richard Allen to resemble a merry-go-round.

Much of the township of Cockatoo was destroyed in the catastrophic Ash Wednesday bushfires of 16 February 1983, which devastated large areas of Victoria and South Australia. The fire that affected Cockatoo started late in the day and changed direction after the wind went around to the south-west. Many local firefighters and appliances were away fighting fires elsewhere, so the township was exposed. The fire burned 1,800 hectares of land and destroyed 307 buildings. Six people lost their lives in and around Cockatoo.

During the fires the kindergarten building became a refuge for about 300 local people, almost half of whom were children. In the days after the fires the Red Cross used the building as a registration centre.

During the Australian tour of HRH the Prince of Wales and HRH the Princess of Wales in March 1983 the couple visited Cockatoo, and planted a Flowering Gum (*Corymbia ficifolia*, formerly *Eucalyptus ficifolia*) at the entrance to the kindergarten to mark the occasion.

The roof of the building was badly affected by the fires, and deteriorated further in the following years, resulting in 2005 in the kindergarten moving to another site. The building remained unused for several years and during this time suffered from vandalism. Council's decision to demolish the building in 2011 met with opposition from the local community, which wanted it kept as a memorial.

How is it significant?

The Former Cockatoo Kindergarten is of historical and social significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

Victoria's Framework of Historic Themes identifies 'seeking refuge from fires' as one sub-theme under 'living with natural processes' (Theme 1.5) and lists 'fire refuges' as an example of places representing this theme.

The former Cockatoo Kindergarten is historically significant for its role as a refuge for about three hundred residents of Cockatoo during the devastating Ash Wednesday bushfires of 16 February 1983. The Ash Wednesday fires were a highly significant event in the course and pattern of Victoria's cultural history and the former Kindergarten is an outstanding representative example of a place of refuge during that event.

The former Cockatoo Kindergarten is of social significance for its ability to resonate with other fire-affected communities and the wider Victorian public and interpret to them the experience of 'seeking refuge from fires'.

## 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:**

### PERMIT EXEMPTIONS

The purpose of the permit exemptions is to allow works that do not impact on the heritage significance of the place to occur without the need for a permit. Works which impact on the significance of the place are subject to permit applications.

General Conditions: 1. All exempted works 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 alterations shall cease and the Executive Director shall be notified.

Note: All heritage places have the potential to contain significant sub-surface artefacts and other remains. In most cases it will be necessary to obtain approval from Heritage Victoria before the undertaking any works that have a significant sub-surface component.

General Conditions: 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan approved by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it.

Note: The existence of 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.

### 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 may 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 not be required to obtain a heritage permit.

### Landscape

\* The process of gardening, hedge clipping, removal of dead plants, emergency and safety works and landscaping in accordance with the original concept.

\* The replanting of plant species to conserve the landscape character.

\* Plant labelling and interpretive signage.

\* Management of trees in accordance with Australian Standard, Pruning of amenity trees AS 4373

- \* Removal of plants listed as State Prohibited and Regionally Controlled Weeds in the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994
- \* Repairs, conservation and maintenance to hard landscape elements, gravel paths and roadway, edging, fences and gates and gravel driveway.
- \* Removal of any part of the Kindergarten demolished prior to 17 February 2012 and no longer physically attached to the building's structure will be considered exempt.
- \* Installation, removal or replacement of garden watering and drainage systems
- \* Removal of Car Parks and treated pine barriers.
- \* Removal and/or replacement of the sandpit and children's play equipment.

## Theme

### 8. Building community life

Construction dates	1976,
Architect/Designer	Public Works Department,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Hermes Number	165961
Property Number	

## History

### CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

[from <http://www.onmydoorstep.com.au/at/3781/cockatoo>]

The township of Cockatoo was named after the nearby Cockatoo Creek and was known as Cockatoo Creek until 1917. It was first settled in the 1870s but progress was slow as the land was difficult to clear.

Shortly after the end of the World War I, a large number of immigrants, including a large number of Italians, arrived in Cockatoo. Timber cutting was the major source of employment and this industry received a considerable boost when the narrow-gauge railway from Upper Ferntree Gully to Gembrook was completed in 1900. The railway brought leisure-seeking Melburnians into the area and a market for subdivision arose. The railway is operated today as the Puffing Billy Railway.

Cockatoo is best known as one of the worst-hit townships during the disastrous Ash Wednesday Bushfires on 16 February 1983, when fires flared out of control in Victoria and southeastern South Australia, devastating many thousands of hectares of forest and many houses. Seventy-five people lost their lives (47 in Victoria, 28 in South Australia), and nearly 2,500 houses were destroyed (2080 in Victoria, 380 in South Australia). The worst affected areas were the Dandenong Ranges east of Melbourne, the Macedon area northwest of Melbourne, and the Mount Lofty Ranges east of Adelaide. Much of the town of Cockatoo was destroyed with over 300 buildings and 6 lives lost.

### HISTORY OF PLACE

In 1976 the residents of Cockatoo formed the Cockatoo Community Co-operative, and raised the money to build a kindergarten, as well as a bowls club and tennis court, to service the growing population in the area. It was backed by the state government and funded through the Co-op, with loans taken out with the old State Savings Bank and by selling shares to community members. The land was provided by the then Pakenham Shire Council, and the Council became the owner of the buildings.

The building was designed by the architect Richard Allen and was designed to resemble a merry-go-round. It was circular in plan and it was intended that eight coloured horses be placed around the edge, though these were not added.

On the 16th of February 1983, when the disastrous bushfires known as the Ash Wednesday fires were raging through Cockatoo, approximately 300 people, almost half of whom were children, and many pets, took shelter in this building. The building was unsuitable in many ways, with an inflammable asphalt roof and large areas of glass on the outer walls, but it stood in a relatively clear area. Three men climbed on the roof and spent the night hosing it down and continually removed burning embers to stop it from igniting. In the days after Ash Wednesday the building was used by the Red Cross as a registration centre.

Cockatoo was one of the towns worst effected by the fires. Six people died and about three hundred buildings destroyed.

On the 25th of March 1983 Cockatoo was visited by HRH Prince Charles and Princess Diana during their visit to Australia. During this visit they jointly planted a tree in the kindergarten grounds to mark the occasion.

Although the kindergarten building survived the fires, the roof was badly affected by the heat. Over the following years it was continually patched, but the roof continued to leak and eventually made the facility unusable, and a decision was made in 2005 to move the kindergarten to another site. The kindergarten building was vandalised and the building was boarded up by Council, but further vandalism occurred with the glass windows broken and the interiors destroyed. In 2011 Council made a decision to demolish the building, which met with a great deal of opposition from the community, which would like it to become a community facility, and has led to the building's nomination to the VHR.

## Plaque Citation

This kindergarten, built in 1976, became a refuge for about three hundred local residents, many of them children, during the devastating Ash Wednesday fires of 16 February 1983 which destroyed much of the town of Cockatoo.

## Extent of Registration

1. All of the land marked L1 on Diagram 2303 held by the Executive Director being part of Lot 1 on Title Plan 172448
2. All of the building marked B1 and the *Corymbia ficifolia* marked F1 on Diagram 2303 held by the Executive Director.

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*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/>*