

---

# Coomaroo



Coomaroo, 63 Albany Road,  
Toorak

---

## Location

63 Albany Road Toorak, STONNINGTON CITY

## Municipality

STONNINGTON CITY

## Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO485

## Heritage Listing

Stonnington City

---

## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is significant?

The single-storey Federation style brick villa at No. 63 Albany Road, Toorak. Externally it is a competent and early (1898-99) example of the Federation style, the development of which, from the 1880s, was interrupted by the 1890s Depression. It is individually distinguished amongst its peers in Stonnington and elsewhere by its crenelated turret crowned with a low decorative cast iron balustrade which is highly likely to be unique in

Melbourne.

The interiors have typical Edwardian detailing and appear to be highly intact. Interiors of this era are less numerous and are consequently rarer than Victorian interiors, moreover highly intact ones.

Elements which are not of any significance are the front fence and gates, garage, swimming pool, structure/element in south-east corner, deck and addition (bedrooms) in the north-west corner.

How is it significant?

No. 63 Albany Road, Toorak is of local historical and aesthetic/architectural significance.

Why is it significant?

Historically the subdivision and Walter Murray Buntine's houses are demonstrative of an early subdivision of part of one of the mansion estates, a phase of development which became widespread in the twentieth century and which lead to the breaking up and demolition of almost all of the great mansions which characterised the prestigious nature of the area. The private subdivision of the land from 'Ottawa' by Charles Officer, James Grice and Walter Murray Buntine, all prominent Melburnians, was one of the first expressions of the subdivision of the large estates and by the owner as compared more typically by a development company. It is also a rare, almost unique, example of a villa development in the 1890s in this area where and when the mansions still dominated.

It is also an example of a standard of accommodation appropriate for the gentleman class in an area which was dominated by the mansions of the super-rich.

It is also almost the last vestige of the late nineteenth century in Kooyong Road between Malvern and Toorak Roads and the immediate environs which were dominated by mansions and which is recalled in real-time by James Paxton.

The architectural characteristics displayed at No. 63 Albany Road accord with the principal characteristics of the Federation style. The design of this house is a well resolved and carefully designed composition which compares well with relevant examples in Stonnington. Federation-style dwellings with turrets are comparatively rare throughout Melbourne and this example is distinguished amongst its peers by its crenelated turret crowned with a low decorative cast iron balustrade which is highly likely to be unique in Melbourne. It is a local landmark.

Despite not having an identified architect, it is of a calibre which is indicative of a professional hand (architect) and the lack of an attribution does not diminish its significance.

The interiors of the principal rooms are highly original and intact and given that many examples of Federation villas which are comparable externally have had their interiors modernised, the interiors are quite rare. There is potential, because of their intactness and their level of appointment, to yield further information about historical decorative schemes of the Federation style, about which comparatively little is known presently.

Heritage Study/Consultant Stonnington - 63 Albany Road, Toorak, Anthemion Consultancies, 2016;

Construction dates 1898,

Hermes Number 200290

Property Number

---

## Physical Description 1

The site was inspected from the street in December 2015 and January 2016 but there is limited visibility above a high masonry wall and a hedge. The property was subdivided and an extensive renovation was undertaken in 2008 by Len Warson, property developer of Glenvill Homes and then the neighbour. Despite this, the key elements remain.

No. 63 Albany Road is a single storey, red brick villa, most likely tuckpointed, which was originally rectangular in plan but which is now L-shaped as a consequence of additions. The remaining original plan form is highlighted below. The rear wing, left of the pergola, originally projected as far as the wing to the right (east) and appears to have been extended. There is an addition at the east end adjacent to Kooyong Road which is a garage and which appears to be semi-detached or minimally connected to the verandah.

The plan form is typical of a Federation villa with the main entrance from the side i.e. from Albany Road when the address was Kooyong Road; octagonal foyer, canted bay and a turret at a prominent corner, creating a diagonal axis to the L-shaped plan. The part of the house which is within the original plan form is the rumpus, dining, entry foyer (vestibule), living, laundry, powder and two bedrooms, the library and the meals area. The north wall and bay window of what was most likely the original dining room, now the meals area, has been demolished. The family room is an addition, as is the deck and the double storey bedroom wing in the north-west corner. The rear wing in the south-west corner of the site is where the washhouse and closet were located. The plan form expresses the hierarchy of the principal rooms i.e. the present dining and living rooms, vestibule and hallway all of which are emphasised by the ridges and the turret.

The facade (north elevation) is dominated by a faceted and crenellated turret, clad in terracotta tiles, set above a deep moulded and panelled cornice and terminating in a cast iron crown (cresting) surmounted above another deep moulded cornice. The north ridge is prominent on the skyline and draws the eye further along (west) to three gables, the larger two of which have terracotta finials. The small gable is infilled with strapwork (half-timbering) and probably stuccoed panels. The larger central gable appears to have similar detailing but also contains a pair of small windows or vents, and is set on corbels (jettied). These elements create the impression of a slight oversail of the wall below which contains what appears to be a stuccoed frieze. The bargeboards are set on curved timber brackets. The gable to the west appears similar but may have only one window or vent. One large brick chimney, which is the living room chimney, with a corbelled cap and decorative stucco strapwork is visible. Four chimneys are extant. The visible ridges have terracotta cresting.

The verandah roof is integral with the principal roof form and sweeps down to the perimeter of the verandah which is timber-framed, with the valence in an open square pattern and timber brackets to the posts. The verandah floor appears to be in brown tessellated tiles. The deep setback behind the verandah makes the walls less prominent. The walls are red brick, probably tuckpointed and set on a bluestone plinth. They are delineated by two bands of stucco: one at sill height and the other at approximately the mid-point of the windows. The window sashes in the bay window under the main gable comprises a group of four timber-framed casements with leadlight highlights and scalloped decorative panels beneath. The window sashes to the canted bay under turret are timber-framed casements and elsewhere under the verandah they appear to be elongated timber-framed, double-hung sash windows. Window and door sills are probably bluestone.

West of the main gable is a pergola and deck behind which (south) is an operable wall (folding doors). Originally this area was a wall. Probably containing windows, which was set back from the bay window of the living room and the rear wing which contains a bedroom and family room. The family room is an addition. At the rear in the south-west corner is also a double storey section, all of which is most probably an addition.

There is a vehicle entrance from Kooyong Road and a pedestrian entrance from Albany Road.

The interiors are very much as described by James Paxton. The ceilings of the present dining and living rooms at least, are set out in moulded panels and with moulded cornices below, and in the dining room there is a frieze area above presumed timber picture rails. This room also has a decorative, simple "carved" timber screen at the south end which creates a type of inglenook, or alcove. The rumpus room also has a timber screen which creates a type of inglenook behind the window.

The entrance vestibule appears to have retained its fireplace, and possibly the mantel, grate and hearth, located opposite the entrance door. Inside the entrance is a timber panelled dado, with a moulded dado rail and a deep moulded cornice. The floor boards appear to be original. The entrance doorcase is timber with a tripartite highlight window and sidelights in leadlight which appears to be Victorian in style. Beneath the sidelights are

timber panels. The door has six panels. Internal door openings have moulded timber architraves and the door to the living room, which was probably the original dining room, at least has five panels. In the centre of the main upper panel is another panel with timber mouldings extending to the perimeter mouldings of the panel. This design is similar to doors in 'Stonington', Glenferrie Road, Malvern and may have been French polished or had painted decoration such as a design in the panel.

The "turret" room, probably the original drawing room, is the most elaborate room in the house now. The plan form of the rumpus and drawing rooms appear to be original and contains a secondary entrance to the house, and individually to each room from the east elevation (Kooyong Road). There appears to always have been direct access from the garden. The doors are half-glazed and with highlights and all infilled with leadlight. The timber-framed windows are casement with decorative highlights containing leadlight.

The drawing room shares a chimney breast and flu with the rumpus room and has retained what appears to be the original timber mantel, tiled grate and hearth. The panelled ceiling is panelled out with strapwork and there is a shallow cornice below which is a deep frieze and a moulded picture rail which is presumably timber. The decorative plaster vent cover(s) is also probably original.

The timber-framed windows are casements with decorative highlights containing leadlight.

The alcove under the turret is framed by square pilasters, set on a slight angle, which have foliated moulded capitals and staff beads beneath a moulded arch with a keystone and recessed panels to the soffit in the Victorian Classical style.

The rumpus room has retained its deep moulded timber skirting, timber screen, and the frieze and cornice also appear to be original. The decorative plaster vent cover is also probably original. It is not clear whether or not the plaster ceiling is panelled out. The timber flooring may be original or a replacement. The chimney breast is behind the camera and the original mantel, grate and hearth may be extant. The timber-framed windows are casements with decorative highlights containing leadlight.

The dining room has a panelled ceiling, frieze containing presumably decorative vent covers, above a presumed moulded timber picture rail. Moulded timber skirting also appear original. The timber flooring may be original or a replacement. The timber-framed windows are casements with decorative highlights containing Victorian style leadlight. The chimney breast has staff beads to the salient corners and the polished timber mantel and grate appear to be original. The hearth is probably original and tiled.

This room above was probably a bedroom or may have been the dressing room and has been re-fitted out as a library. The raked chimney breast in the right hand corner is original and the cast iron grate may be original. The timber mantel appears to have been installed as part of the library fitout. It is not clear if the ceiling is original or not. The timber-framed double-hung sash window is appropriate as a window type in this location at the back of the house. The timber floor may be original.

The exterior of the dwelling and the principal interiors are demonstrative of the Federation style while the original drawing room combines typical Victorian and Edwardian detailing. The principal rooms appear to be highly intact. They are of interest in demonstrating the transition between the two styles and the continued availability of Victorian mouldings, joinery and hardware. Interiors of this type are not numerous and are consequently rare. While having undergone alterations, the principal elements of this dwelling remain intact and it is able to shed some light on architectural taste and fashion around the turn of the nineteenth century. The house also demonstrates the high level of appointment and comfort which was appropriate for the professional and/or gentleman class and in comparison with the more elaborate mansions which were still the main residential form in this part of Toorak when this house and its neighbours were constructed.

An auction notice published in 1907 set out the features of 'Wandai':

*Thursday, 21st February*

*At Rooms. At Half-past 2 o'Clock*

*"Wandai"*

*Boundary and Albany Roads,*

Toorak

*C.J and T. Ham are instructed by the owner to sell by public auction, as above,*

*Land, having a frontage of 90 ft. to Boundary- road by a depth of over 200 ft. along Albany-road, on which is erected that*

*Superb Villa Residence,*

*Known as "Wandai" and containing handsome entrance hall, three spacious reception rooms, four bedrooms, dressing room, servant's hall, kitchen, two servant's rooms, two bathrooms, scullery, laundry, larder, cellar, &c.*

*This is without doubt one of the most attractive, fully equipped, tastefully finished and lavishly appointed villas in Toorak, and occupies an exceedingly choice position, elevated, and in a select neighbourhood, within 6 minutes' walk of the tram terminus.*

*Terms, ¼ cash, balance at 6, 12 and 18 months at 4 ½ per cent, with right to pay off at any time, or cash at option of purchaser.*

*For further particulars of title apply to Messrs. Blake and Riggall, solicitors, 120 William-street, and for orders to view, &c. to the auctioneers, 75 Swanston-street.*

Another advertisement for the auction claimed that 'Wandai' was 'recognised as ONE of the LOVELIEST VILLAS in the district'.

The house was described recently by one real estate agent as:

*'Albany Road - The Ultimate Luxury'*

*Located in Toorak's finest street.*

*This splendid period home set in a botanic garden has been extensively refurbished with meticulous attention to detail restoring this grand home to its former glory.*

*"Coomaroo" comprises: 5 bedrooms (3 with lavish ensuites) a grand entry, extensively fitted study, elegant formal sitting and dining rooms, powder room, family and meals area with extensive use of glass, an abundance of natural light and stone Meile kitchen with emporite cupboards Features : 4 car garage, heating/cooling, swimming pool, security system, cellar and ample storage.*

*Land size 14,000 sq ft. (1294m<sup>2</sup>) approx.<sup>29</sup>*

Land at the rear was subdivided off when the property was last sold.<sup>30</sup>

*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/>*