

MELBOURNE AIDS MEMORIAL QUILT



Victorian AIDS Memorial Quilt Block B018



Victorian AIDS Memorial Quilt Block B019



Victorian AIDS Memorial Quilt Block B022



Victorian AIDS Memorial Quilt Block B021



Victorian AIDS Memorial Quilt Block B039



Victorian AIDS Memorial Quilt Block B020



Victorian AIDS Memorial Quilt Block B052



Victorian AIDS Memorial Quilt Block B040



Victorian AIDS Memorial Quilt Block B051



Victorian AIDS Memorial Quilt Block B061



Victorian AIDS Memorial Quilt Block B062



Victorian AIDS Memorial Quilt Block B064



Victorian AIDS Memorial Quilt Block B063



Victorian AIDS Memorial Quilt Block B075



Victorian AIDS Memorial Quilt Block B077



Victorian AIDS Memorial Quilt Block B076



Victorian AIDS Memorial Quilt Block B087



Victorian AIDS Memorial Quilt Block B065



Victorian AIDS Memorial Quilt Block B088



Victorian AIDS Memorial Quilt Block B106



Victorian AIDS Memorial Quilt Block B086



Victorian AIDS Memorial Quilt Block B103



Victorian AIDS Memorial Quilt Block B107



Victorian AIDS Memorial Quilt Block B108



Victorian AIDS Memorial Quilt Block BV02



Victorian AIDS Quilt Bisexual Panel



Victorian AIDS Memorial Quilt Block BV03



Victorian AIDS Memorial Quilt Block B121



Candlelight Vigil Poster 2001



Quilt displayed at REB Undated

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Location

MELBOURNE CITY

Municipality

MELBOURNE CITY

Level of significance

Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2418

VHR Registration

June 23, 2022

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is significant?

The Melbourne AIDS Memorial Quilt consisting of 209 quilt panels (sewn onto 27 fabric backing blocks typically in groups of eight) each made by a family member or volunteer from 1988 onwards to commemorate a person or group who died from an AIDS-related condition.

How is it significant?

The Melbourne AIDS Memorial Quilt is of historical and social significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criteria for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

Criterion A

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

Criterion D

Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects.

Criterion G

Strong or special association with a particular present-day community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.

Criterion H

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

Why is it significant?

The Melbourne AIDS Memorial Quilt is historically significant as one of the most important artefacts of the AIDS crisis in Victoria. Each quilt panel represents a person who died from an AIDS-related condition and had an association to Melbourne or Victoria. Originally coordinated by volunteers working from the Fairfield Hospital from late 1988, each quilt was made by family members, loved ones or volunteers working within community groups, and is highly individualised to commemorate the life of the person. The Melbourne AIDS Memorial Quilt represents the community care, volunteerism and political activism associated with the AIDS crisis. [Criterion A]

The Melbourne AIDS Memorial Quilt is one of Victoria's largest, most important and enduring pieces of community art. Part of the international AIDS memorial quilt movement, it represents a pivotal moment in the history of commemorative textile making in Victoria. It powerfully harnesses and transforms the centuries-old western tradition of quilt making – typically a woman's artform – to allow thousands of people to express their collective grief and mourn together, particularly on World AIDS Day. The quilt is both highly personal and deeply political, and demonstrates the human dimensions of one of the late twentieth century's most devastating epidemics. [Criterion D]

The Melbourne AIDS Memorial Quilt is iconic in Victoria and has a strong, special, and continuing association with particular social groups affected by the AIDS crisis and their families. This includes the LGBTIQ+ community – particularly gay and bisexual men – and other communities at risk such as blood transfusion recipients, IV drug users, men who have sex with men (MSM), and sex workers, as well as those who cared for and still mourn them. In addition to being displayed annually on World AIDS Day on 1 December, quilt panels are regularly exhibited around the state to raise awareness of the continuing impact of HIV/AIDS. The Melbourne AIDS Memorial Quilt still accepts quilt panels to commemorate people who die (or have died) from AIDS-related conditions. [Criterion G]

The Melbourne AIDS Memorial Quilt has a special association with people and communities affected by HIV/AIDS from the 1980s to the present day. They are an important part of Victoria's history, and their experiences are evident in each quilt panel. The visual and evocative qualities of the quilt demonstrate the enduring impact of the epidemic on these communities. [Criterion H]

Permit Exemptions

Permit Exemptions The following activities are not considered to cause harm to the cultural heritage significance of the Melbourne AIDS Memorial Quilt and do not require a permit from Heritage Victoria.

- Display at the Positive Living Centre (PLC)**
 - Display of quilt panel blocks within the Positive Living Centre (PLC) by Thorne Harbour Health for commemorative and education purposes under the Storage, Handling and Display Policy.
- Loans to Other Organisations in Victoria**
 - The temporary loan, transport and display of block panels of the Melbourne AIDS Memorial Quilt for no more than three months to

partner organisations in Victoria for display for commemorative and education purposes, under the Storage, Handing and Display Policy. Thorne Harbour Health must 1) establish a formal loan agreement with the other organisation; and 2) notify the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria, of all planned loans and confirm the return of loans with a short condition report.

- Conservation of the quilt by a textiles conservator accredited by the Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material (AICCM).
- Loans to Other Organisations in Victoria (there is no permit exemption for this and interstate loans must go through a permits approval process)

For the loan of quilt panel blocks to partner organisations outside Victoria please contact Heritage Victoria.

Theme

8. Building community life 9. Shaping cultural and creative life

Construction dates	1988,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered object,
Other Names	AIDS MEMORIAL QUILT, AIDS QUILT, HIV/AIDS QUILT, KEYWORD LGBTIQ+, VICTORIAN AIDS MEMORIAL QUILT,
Hermes Number	208302
Property Number	

History

The Melbourne AIDS Memorial Quilt

The Melbourne AIDS Memorial Quilt is historically significant as one of the most important objects associated with the AIDS Crisis in Victoria. It is comprised of 209 quilt panels sewn onto 27 square fabric blocks, typically in groups of eight. Each quilt panel represents a person or group of people who died from AIDS-related conditions and had an association with Victoria.

Most of the quilt panels date from the late 1980s and early 1990s, prior to effective treatments which saw the number of AIDS-related deaths decline. The Quilt foregrounds the human dimensions and personal impact of the AIDS epidemic. It is an important example of community and activist art by families and volunteers to publicly express their loss and memorialise their loved ones. Across Australia since the late 1980s, it is estimated that approximately 900 AIDS memorial quilt panels have been produced. Some are held in museums, while others remain in community organisations. There are around 97 blocks held by the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (formerly the Powerhouse Museum) in Sydney, each containing around eight panels, primarily commemorating people from New South Wales. The Melbourne AIDS Memorial Quilt is held by Thorne Harbour Health Melbourne (formerly the Victorian AIDS Council). There are also some quilt panels in Adelaide held by the South Australia Mobilisation + Empowerment for Sexual Health (SAMESH).

The HIV/AIDS Epidemic

The first Australian death from AIDS was recorded in Melbourne in 1983. This followed the official reporting of a new disease in the USA in 1981 and its official naming in 1982 as 'AIDS' (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). Between 1983 and 1985, HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) spread rapidly in some Australian communities, initially largely gay and bisexual men, and men who have sex with men (MSM), in inner urban Melbourne and Sydney. Other communities at risk were blood transfusion recipients, IV drug users and sex workers. From 1983, as HIV and AIDS were increasingly diagnosed in Victorian communities, the Fairfield Hospital (VHR H1878) became the centre for AIDS treatment for all Victorians.

Making the 'Melbourne Chapter' Quilt at Fairfield

The Melbourne AIDS Memorial Quilt is part of an international tradition which began in San Francisco in 1985. The first AIDS Quilt was displayed in Washington in 1987. The World Health Organisation (WHO) provided seed grants for similar projects across the world. Internationally, quilt panels were made by family or loved ones (mainly mothers) and were unique to the memorialised person. Some panels included names, dates, photos and personal messages. Others featured badges, clothing, teddy bears, sequins and exotic personal items. All quilt panels were 3 feet (0.91 m) by 6 feet (1.8 m), the standard size of a grave, symbolising equality of death and grief.

In September 1988, the AIDS Memorial Quilt tradition started in Australia. The Fairfield Hospital was the coordination point for the 'Melbourne Chapter', with volunteers providing sewing instructions and accepting quilt panels from all regions of Victoria. Quilt projects were locally based, typically being

coordinated from a city hospital or community centre where people understood the grief and stigma associated with an AIDS death. The first display of quilt panels from the Melbourne AIDS Memorial Quilt happened in Sydney on 1 December 1988 (World AIDS Day) as part of the Australian AIDS Memorial Quilt then comprising 35 quilt panels from different states. From the 1990s, each Australian state quilt has been displayed on World AIDS Day in its capital city so that family and community can attend the associated unfolding ceremonies at candlelight vigils. Some of these early AIDS candlelight vigils in Melbourne occurred at the Royal Exhibition Buildings (VHR H1501). There would be a march from the City Square by crowds holding candles and banners seeking more action on HIV/AIDS and acceptance of people living with them. At the Royal Exhibition Buildings, large pre-folded quilt blocks were ritually unfolded. This was accompanied by music and notable public figures gave speeches afterwards. When Fairfield Hospital closed in 1996, the Melbourne AIDS Quilt and its coordination was moved to the office of the Victorian AIDS Council (VAC) in Claremont Street, South Yarra. It was subsequently located at the Positive Living Centre (PLC) where it remains in 2022.

Quilts as Community Art

The first AIDS Memorial Quilts in the US drew on a centuries-old western tradition of quilting, typically a woman's art form. Quilts are highly symbolic objects and have historically often been made to celebrate or memorialise a family or community member or important event. They are traditionally passed through generations and demonstrate a sense of family connection, love, identity and loyalty. The AIDS quilt movement deliberately sought to tap into (and perhaps subvert) sentiments of nostalgia, reminiscent of sewing circles, community belonging and the feminine arts. AIDS memorial quilts have a uniformity of structure (equal panel sizes) and allow for a huge range of visual diversity and artistic expression. They have an affective quality which captures the character and individuality of the person who has died.

Commemoration and Education

While the Melbourne AIDS Memorial Quilt began as a commemorative endeavour, it has become one of Victoria's most valuable resources for promoting a compassionate and educational dialogue about HIV/AIDS within diverse communities. Its non-threatening nature and artistic and creative approach enables accessibility to the content and allows people from all walks of life to learn about the AIDS epidemic from its human side. The Melbourne AIDS Memorial Quilt is displayed annually at the Positive Living Centre and other sites that form part a memorial service on World AIDS Day on 1

Definitions and numbering

In the textiles making world, the word 'quilt' has two meanings. From a traditional technical perspective, a 'quilt' demonstrates a specific process of 'quilting' where stitches pass through three layers – a decorative top layer, a padded middle layer, and a solid bottom piece – to create a three-dimensional padded surface. 2) For the layperson, the term 'quilt' encompasses textiles created using diverse sewing techniques including patchwork, embroidery and applique, and are evocative of traditional quilts. The Melbourne AIDS Memorial Quilt is technically a 'coverlet' made by sewing decorative materials onto a backing panel. There are many historically significant 'quilts' which are also coverlets, including the Australian Changi Quilt embroidered by women internees in 1942 (Australian War Memorial, REL/14235). In this report, the Executive Director will use the term 'quilt' to refer to the Melbourne AIDS Memorial Quilt. This to acknowledge the use of 'quilt' in the international AIDS Memorial Quilt movement from 1985.

AIDS memorial quilt terms

The quilt: The Melbourne AIDS Memorial Quilt in its entirety

Block: A square of backing fabric measuring approximately 12ft x12ft with 4-8 quilt panels sewn onto it.

Quilt panel: An individual 3ft x 6ft quilt made in memory of a person or group.

Block numbers: The Melbourne AIDS Memorial Quilt consists of 27 blocks with the following block numbers: 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 39, 40, 51, 52, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 75, 76, 77, 86, 87, 88, 103, 106, 107, 108, 121, BV02 and BV03. This numbering system for blocks dates from the 1980s when a number was assigned to all blocks in Australia. The numbers which appear to be 'missing' (for example 1-17 and 23-38) were assigned to blocks from states other than Victoria. This numbering system is part of the history of AIDS Memorial Quilts in Australia. Some documentation of AIDS Memorial Quilts in Australia with their numbers can be found here: <http://www.josken.net/hiv aids5.htm>

Selected bibliography

'Australian Aids Quilt - In Place of The Missing Web Site Which Contained All the Blocks and Panels of the Australian Quilt Project',

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Australian Queer Archives, *A History of LGBTIQ+ Victoria in 100 Places and Objects*, Melbourne, 2021.

Gero, Annette and Katie Somerville, *Making the Australian Quilt 1800-1950*, National Gallery of Victoria, 2016.

Museums Victoria, 'HIV and AIDS Epidemic in Victoria', <https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/articles/16911> [Accessed 28 October 2021]

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Tuan Nguyen, 'Co-existence and collaboration: Australian AIDS quilts in public museums and community collections', *Museum & Society*, 16 (1), 2018, pp. 41-55.

Poulton, Fiona, Lucy Bracey and Katherine Sheedy, *Under the red ribbon: thirty years of the Victorian Aids Council / Gay Men's Health Centre*, 2013.

Power, Jennifer 'Rites of Belonging: The AIDS Memorial Quilt', in

Movement, Knowledge, Emotion: Gay Activism and HIV-AIDS in Australia, ANU Press, Canberra, 2011, pp. 145-58. Victoria and Albert Museum, 'An Introduction to Quilting and Patchwork', <https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/an-introduction-to-quilting-and-patchwork> [Accessed 28 February 2022]

Assessment Against Criteria

Criterion

The Melbourne AIDS Memorial Quilt is of historical and social significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criteria for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

Criterion A

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

Criterion D

Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects.

Criterion G

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Criterion H

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Extent of Registration

NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the Heritage Act 2017, I give notice under section 53 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by including a place in the Heritage Register:

Number: H2418

Category: Registered Object

Place: Melbourne AIDS Memorial Quilt

Location: Housed at 31–51 Commercial Road,
South Yarra

Municipality: Stonnington City

All of the object called the Melbourne AIDS Memorial Quilt consisting of 209 quilt panels on 27 fabric backing blocks, which are listed in the inventory held by the Executive Director.

Dated 23 June 2022

STEVEN AVERY

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/>