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# Mechanics Institute



HO60 - 209 Nicholson Street,  
Footscray.JPG

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## Location

209 Nicholson Street, FOOTSCRAY VIC 3011 - Property No 3056011400

## Municipality

MARIBYRNONG CITY

## Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO60

## Heritage Listing

Maribyrnong City

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

The Mechanics Institute is of historical and local architectural significance to the City of Maribyrnong. Historically the building is important as the city's main library for many years and a physical reminder of the mechanics institutes which dominated male social life and adult learning in the 19th and early 20th centuries in Victoria.

The progress of Victoria in arts, education and industry owes much to the role of the mechanics institutes as venues for self education and learning, particularly among the working classes in industrial suburbs, of which the

Footscray institute was a key example. (Criterion A4 & G1) The mechanics institutes have been subsumed or replaced by municipal libraries and other educational institutes and so where they survive they represent the nineteenth and early twentieth century phenomena. (Criterion B2) Architecturally a simple and typical example of the Queen Anne style adapted to an unusual building type (for the style). (Criterion F1) The associated Cypress trees form an important landscape element.

#### Footscray Conservation Study SOS

Architecturally, not significant but well preserved and historically, of some value as the city's main library for many years and a local physical reminder of the mechanics institutes which dominated male social life in the 19th early 20th centuries in Victoria.

#### Australian Heritage Commission (AHC) criteria

The Australian Heritage Commission criteria consist of a set of eight criteria which cover social, aesthetic, scientific, and historic values. Each criterion has sub-criteria written specifically for cultural or natural values. The relevant criteria are:

A.4 demonstrates well the course and pattern of history, important historic events

G.1 social importance to the community

B.2 rarity

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| Heritage Study/Consultant | Maribyrnong - Maribyrnong Heritage Review, Jill Barnard, Graeme Butler, Francine Gilfedder & Gary Vines, 2000; |
| Construction dates        | 1913,  |
| Hermes Number             | 28557  |
| Property Number           |  |

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## Physical Description 1

This Queen Anne style building is comprised of two linked half-timbered and gabled wings with ridge lines parallel to Nicholson Street. The walls of the ground floor are exposed red brick and the upper walls are rough-cast stucco, while the roof, with its wide eaves and projecting line over the gables, is covered with Marseille pattern terra-cotta tiles. The facade is symmetrical around a gabled entrance porch (despite the asymmetrical domestic examples which are typical of the style) decorated with shaped timbers after Eastern motifs (brackets, shallow segment-arched bressumer and notched detail on the upper face of each post) as are the exposed roof rafters, here and elsewhere. Its floor is paved with red quarry tiles. Another typical attribute is the multi-pane obscured glazing in most window top-lights. A row of Cypress trees which provide a backdrop to the building are part of contemporaneous civic landscaping relating to the Town Hall precinct across the railway line.

## Physical Conditions

Although altered internally, the building is in good condition.

## Integrity

The main doors have been renewed, a new door and screen to the south of Nicholson Street have been inserted and the brick chimneys shafts open on the south have been painted. The roof and guttering of the adjoining building on the north is intrusive, and new walling has been built between the buildings.

## Physical Description 2

Located within a commercial precinct with the Polain-designed corner shop row at Buckley Street (derelict?) and the contemporary Mitchell's Building opposite. A row of cypress trees provide a backdrop and the building is prominent on its island site.

## Historical Australian Themes

### Thematic context

**Australian Principal Theme** Educating

**PAHT Subtheme:** Forming associations, libraries and

**Local Theme** Mechanics Institute and Libraries

## Physical Description 3

**Creation date(s):** 1913 c.

**Heritage Significance** *city*

**Map (Melway)** 42 C5

**Boundary description** The extent of the current allotment

**Local Government Area:** City of Maribyrnong

**Ownership Type** Private

*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/>*