ST AIDAN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH COMPLEX

View of church from James Street

Location

18-24 WILLIAMSON AVENUE, and 5 JAMES STREET, STRATHMORE, MOONEE VALLEY CITY

Municipality

MOONEE VALLEY CITY

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO347

Heritage Listing

Moonee Valley City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is significant?
St Aidan's Anglican Church in Strathmore comprises two distinctive structures: the original church hall (a prefabricated timber ex-army hut erected in 1947) and a new purpose-built brick church that was designed in 1958 and dedicated in 1961. The latter is of conventional plan but unusual external form, incorporating an off-centre gable-roofed nave with butterfly-roofed foyer and squat bell tower, all enlivened by applied ornament (including Castlemaine slate cladding, decorative concrete block screen and projecting brickwork) that is highly

evocative of its era.

How is it significant?
St Aidan's Anglican Church is of historic, aesthetic and architectural significance to the City of Moonee Valley

Why is it significant?
Historically, the original 1947 church hall is significant as an intact example of a prefabricated timber-framed army hut from the Second World War era - a building type that is becoming increasingly rare as military sites are redeveloped. It also provides rare surviving evidence of a typical phenomenon of the immediate post-war period, when ex-army structures were dispersed and adapted for civilian use. More broadly, the original church hall is also historically significant for its associations with the expansion of Strathmore's community facilities (cf the nearby primary school of 1944) in the early post war period.

Aesthetically, the 1960 church is a fine and notably intact example of a building in the so-called "Featurist" idiom of the late 1950s/early 1960s, characterised by eye-catching geometric form (seen here in the off-centre gabled nave roof and butterfly-roofed foyer) and applied ornament and texture (seen here in the use of Castlemaine slate cladding, projecting brickwork, pebbled paving and concrete block screens). The Featurist approach, codified (and denigrated) by critic Robin Boyd in his 1962 book, *The Australian Ugliness*, is more commonly manifested in blatantly commercial buildings such as shopping centres, motels, bowling alleys and the like; this church represents its uncharacteristic application in ecclesiastical design. With its variety of colours, forms, materials and textures, St Aidan's stands out as one of the more boldly decorative examples among the relatively few churches around Melbourne that can be classified as Featurist.

Architecturally, the church is of interest as the only church ever designed by Philip Garside, a Melbourne architect who worked for a number of important firms in the 1960s (including D G Lumsden, Clive Tyers and Norris & Partners) that specialised in commercial, industrial and institutional design. The adjacent kindergarten building is also of interest as a minor example of the work of important ecclesiastical architects Mockridge, Stahle & Mitchell, best known for bold church designs such as Mother of God Catholic Church, East Ivanhoe (1956)

Heritage Study/Consultant	Moonee Valley - City of Moonee Valley Gap Heritage Study, Heritage Alliance, 2005;
Construction dates	1947, 1958,
Architect/Designer	Mockridge, Stahle & Mitchell,
Hermes Number	29784
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

St Aidan's Anglican Church is a church of particularly unusual form and detailing, typical of the highly decorative style of the late 1950s/early 1960s that critic Robin Boyd labelled as 'Featurism'. The church comprises a rectilinear cream brick nave with an asymmetrical gabled roof and a small single-storey fully glazed entry foyer with a butterfly roof. Along Williamson Avenue, the nave has a row of projecting fin-like elements and vertical strip windows with purple glazing, while the James Avenue facade is concealed by a concrete block screen. The forecourt is paved with river pebbles set in concrete; there is a squat bell tower to the left side, clad in Castlemaine slate, from which extends a cream brick spur wall that incorporates an unusual figurative painted tile mural bearing the signature of artist R Berryman.

The church is substantially intact. No significant changes have been made to either the exterior or the interior.

Alongside the main church, fronting James Street is a timber-framed building on an L-shaped plan, now used as St Aidan's Preschool Centre. The larger portion is an ex-army hut that was the original premises of the church in 1947. It is a rectangular hall-like building of a standard prefabricated design, with walls clad in weatherboard to sill height, and thence with strapped cement sheet. It has a broad gabled roof of corrugated galvanised steel, and rows of windows with timber framed multi-paned double-hung sashes. A small addition projects from the north side of the hut, towards the rear. Erected in 1956 as the original kindergarten, it was designed to blend in with the adjacent building, and therefore uses a similar palette of materials. The vicarage, fronting Williamson Avenue on the other side of the church, is a double-storey cream brick building of conventional appearance.

The church and former church hall/kindergarten are both in excellent condition.

Historical Australian Themes

THEMATIC CONTEXT

6.2 Establishing schools

8.6 Worshipping

8.13 Living in cities and suburbs

Physical Description 2

ARCHITECTS/DESIGNERS
Garside, Philip
Mockridge, Stahle & Mitchell

MAKER/BUILDER Clift, J J

CONSTRUCTION DETAILS

Construction started 1947; 1958
Construction completed 1961

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/