



## Heritage Listing

Golden Plains Shire

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### Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is Significant?

The Smythesdale State School No 978 is situated on Allotment 1, Section 40, township of Smythesdale. It was constructed in 1871 as a vested Common School, replacing an earlier Church of England School, established in the early 1850s. The township of Smythesdale (formally Smythe's Creek) is named after Captain John James Barlow Smythe, an early pastoralist who took up a lease comprising 10,440 acres on Smythe's Creek, 8 miles south of Ballarat. Although Smythesdale had an early pastoral history, it is principally known as a gold mining district. Gold was discovered on 7 August 1852 by Herbert Swindells, who was sent out by the Geelong Gold Exploration Committee in charge of a party to prospect in the Woody Yaloak area. According to one account, 'a diggers' township quickly developed, which came to be known as 'Smythe's Creek. Several private and denominational schools operated in Smythesdale during the 1850s. The Church of England School No. 571 was established in 1856, with 88 pupils enrolled by 1858. In 1866 a site for a vested common school was reserved, however this was cancelled and a site proclaimed in 1870, on land used as a farmers market in Becker Street. Smythesdale Common School No.978 opened on the 1 August 1871, with an attendance of 257 pupils. The dichromatic brick school is of standard design, featuring three wings and a gabled slate roof. It is designed in a loosely picturesque Scholastic Gothic style, drawing on distant associations with mediaeval buildings. With the introduction of free, compulsory and secular education under the Victorian *Education Act 1872* the attendance rapidly grew and a two-room extension was commissioned. By 1874 when the brick extension was complete, the attendance was recorded at 499 pupils. In 1911 the school building was remodeled and the preset multi-pane double hung sash windows were introduced into the projecting wings. Today the school is now a campus of the larger Woody Yaloak Primary School group, which includes the Scarsdale, Snake Valley and Ross Creek schools. The school complex includes additional modern buildings which are not significant and is surrounded by perimeter and inter plantings of native shrubs and small trees. The Smythesdale School is largely intact, is in good condition and retains a high degree of integrity.

How is it significant?

The Smythesdale State School is of historical, social and architectural significance to the township of Smythesdale and the Golden Plains Shire.

Why is it significant?

The Smythesdale State School is of historical significance as a large rural school, established under the Common School system in 1871. It is an enduring example of the many schools established to provide education to the children of the Smythesdale area following the discovery of gold and the development of the township.

The school is of social significance as the permanent site for the provision of free and secular education under the innovative Victorian *Education Act 1872*. The role of the school as the focus of community life is reflected in the 1874 brick addition and the 1911 remodeling of the building to accommodate the increased enrolments.

The school is of architectural significance as a surviving example of a large rural common school with a central classroom and projecting wings, dating from the late 19th century.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Golden Plains - Golden Plains Shire Heritage Study Phase 2, Heritage Matters P/L, 2009;
Hermes Number	35104
Property Number	

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## Physical Description 1

The Smythesdale State School is situated on Allotment 1, Section 40 within the township of Smythesdale. The school stands on land previously used as a farmers market. The school is of standard design for a large common school, constructed of dichromatic brickwork featuring three wings and a gabled slate roof. It is designed in a loosely picturesque Scholastic Gothic style. It is composed of a large central school room with symmetrical projecting wings. The school is oriented north-east, towards Heales Street. According to Lawrence Burchell in the publication '*Victorian Schools*' the front porch of the Smythesdale school is 'purely ornamental central porch', as access to the main building is through a small porch oriented east onto Becker Street. This porch, constructed of di-chromatic brickwork, features a gable slate roof and large wooden double door. A decorative wrought iron gate has enhanced this entrance. A set of multi-pane double hung sash windows have been introduced into the fabric of the eastern wing. However, three sets of the original three pane casement windows survive with timber window frames and brick sills. The facade of the building features the original windows. The school, which originally comprised three wings, has been extended and the complex includes additional modern buildings which are not significant. The school site is surrounded by perimeter and inter plantings of native shrubs and small trees. The Smythesdale School is largely intact, is in good condition and retains a high degree of integrity.

## Integrity

The Smythesdale School is largely intact, is in good condition and retains a high degree of integrity.

## Physical Description 2

The whole of the brick school building, including the 1874 extension, excluding the interiors, and the whole of the land being Allotment 1, Section 40, Township of Smythesdale. The modern school buildings at the rear of the brick common school are not included.

## Historical Australian Themes

The Australian Heritage Commission devised the Australian Historic Themes in 2001. The following themes have influenced the historical development of the Smythesdale State School.

### 6 Educating

6.1 Forming associations, libraries and institutes for self-education

6.2 Establishing schools

6.5 Educating people in remote places

### 8 Developing Australia's Cultural Life

8.14 Living in the country and rural settlements

*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/>*