

# CHINESE MISSION CHURCH



H2175 Chinese Mission Church Little Bourke Street May 2008 compressed



4246 Chinese Mission Church. Ground floor interior.



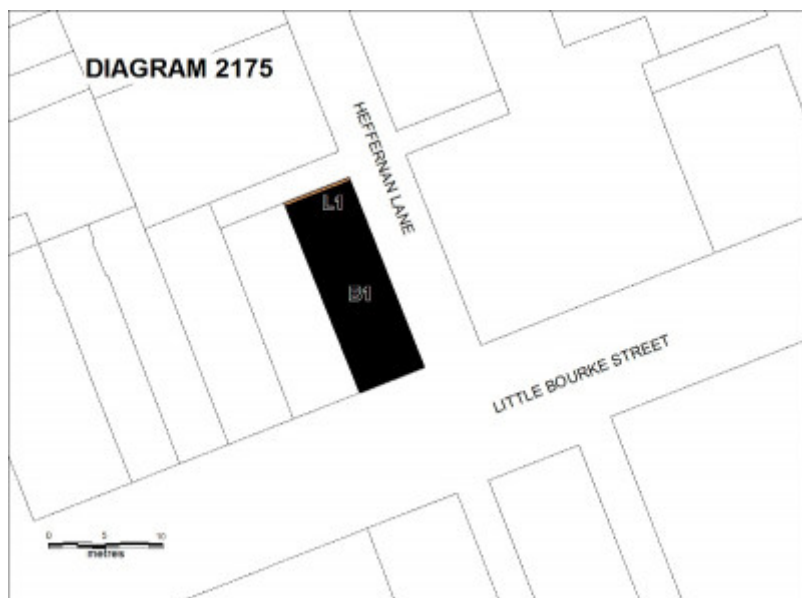
4246 Chinese Mission Church 9. First floor interior.



4246 Chinese Mission Church 14. Heffernan Lane facade



H2175 Chinese Mission Church. Ground floor.



H2175 mission plan

## Location

196 LITTLE BOURKE STREET MELBOURNE, MELBOURNE CITY

## **Municipality**

MELBOURNE CITY

## **Level of significance**

Registered

## **Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number**

H2175

## **Heritage Overlay Numbers**

HO692

## **VHR Registration**

October 9, 2008

## **Heritage Listing**

Victorian Heritage Register

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## **Statement of Significance**

Last updated on - January 8, 1997

What is significant?

The Chinese Mission Church was built in 1872 by the Wesleyan Methodists and is known today as the Chinese Parish Office of the Uniting Church. The Wesleyans provided missions to the Chinese on the goldfields, and this building brought that mission into the Chinatown quarter of Melbourne. Many Chinese came to Victoria during the gold rushes of the 1850s, large numbers of whom were young men from the Canton Delta area of the southern province of Guangdong. Economic hardship and political upheaval forced many to emigrate and provide for family back in China.

The ground floor of the mission building still operates as a place of worship of the Uniting Church in Australia. The two storey building was designed in the Gothic style with simple pointed arch windows and slate roof by architects Crouch and Wilson, and is an early example of polychromatic brickwork incorporating diaper work to the facade and polychromatic voussoirs to the windows. Polychromy was introduced to Victoria by architects Reed and Barnes at St Jude's Anglican Church in 1866 and was to be commonly employed, particularly on Methodist churches, by architects Crouch and Wilson and others until the 1880s. The contractor was James Lee. The building measures approximately 6m x 20m and has a distinct warehouse appearance. The main entrance is from Little Bourke Street via a small timber vestibule. The ground floor was originally set aside for males, and the first floor for females. The interiors are quite plain, with plastered walls, decorative cast iron wall vents, window sills set well above eye level, and the ceiling level to both floors have been lowered with false ceilings. The parish office at the rear, modified by insertion of a concrete floor, allows access to the first floor via a timber stair.

How is it significant?

The Chinese Mission Church is of architectural and historical significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Chinese Mission Church is of architectural significance as a very early example of brick polychromy in Victoria.

The Chinese Mission Church is of historical significance as an early Chinese Mission church, and demonstrates attempts by Wesleyans and other denominations in Victoria to convert local Chinese to Christianity. It is historically significant for its links to early religious and social life of Chinatown, and as a place continuously for worship and as a focal point for the Christian Chinese community since 1872. It is of historical significance for its association with Chinese settlement in Victoria and as tangible evidence of the lives and enterprises of Chinese immigrants who came in large numbers to the Victorian goldfields during the second half of the nineteenth century.

## Permit Exemptions

### General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must **notify** the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

### Specific Exemptions:

General Conditions: 1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object. General Conditions: 2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible. Note: All archaeological places have the potential to contain significant sub-surface artefacts and other remains. In most cases it will be necessary to obtain approval from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria before the undertaking any works that have a significant sub-surface component. General Conditions: 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan endorsed by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it. Note: The existence of a Conservation Management Plan or a Heritage Action Plan endorsed by the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria provides guidance for the management of the heritage values associated with the site. It may not be necessary to obtain a heritage permit for certain works specified in the management plan. General Conditions: 4. Nothing in this determination prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions. General Conditions: 5. Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the

responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authorities where applicable.

**Regular Site Maintenance :** The following site maintenance works are permit exempt under section 66 of the Heritage Act 1995: a) regular site maintenance provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground features or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits; b) the maintenance of an item to retain its conditions or operation without the removal of or damage to the existing fabric or the introduction of new materials; c) cleaning including the removal of surface deposits, organic growths, or graffiti by the use of low pressure water and natural detergents and mild brushing and scrubbing; d) repairs, conservation and maintenance to plaques, memorials, roads and paths, fences and gates and drainage and irrigation. e) the replacement of existing services such as cabling, plumbing, wiring and fire services that uses existing routes, conduits or voids, and does not involve damage to or the removal of significant fabric. Note: Surface patina which has developed on the fabric may be an important part of the item's significance and if so needs to be preserved during maintenance and cleaning. Note: Any new materials used for repair must not exacerbate the decay of existing fabric due to chemical incompatibility, obscure existing fabric or limit access to existing fabric for future maintenance. Repair must maximise protection and retention of fabric and include the conservation of existing details or elements.

**Public Safety and Security :** The following public safety and security activities are permit exempt under section 66 of the Heritage Act 1995, a) public safety and security activities provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground structures or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits; b) the erection of temporary security fencing, scaffolding, hoardings or surveillance systems to prevent unauthorised access or secure public safety which will not adversely affect significant fabric of the place including archaeological features; c) development including emergency stabilisation necessary to secure safety where a site feature has been irreparably damaged or destabilised and represents a safety risk to its users or the public. Note: Urgent or emergency site works are to be undertaken by an appropriately qualified specialist such as a structural engineer, or other heritage professional.

**Signage and Site Interpretation :** The following Signage and Site Interpretation activities are permit exempt under section 66 of the Heritage Act 1995, a) signage and site interpretation activities provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground structures or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits; b) the erection of non-illuminated signage for the purpose of ensuring public safety or to assist in the interpretation of the heritage significance of the place or object and which will not adversely affect significant fabric including landscape or archaeological features of the place or obstruct significant views of and from heritage values or items; c) signage and site interpretation products must be located and be of a suitable size so as not to obscure or damage significant fabric of the place; d) signage and site interpretation products must be able to be later removed without causing damage to the significant fabric of the place; Note: The development of signage and site interpretation products must be consistent in the use of format, text, logos, themes and other display materials. Note: Where possible, the signage and interpretation material should be consistent with other schemes developed on similar or associated sites. It may be necessary to consult with land managers and other stakeholders concerning existing schemes and strategies for signage and site interpretation.

**Minor Works :** Note: Any Minor Works that in the opinion of the Executive Director will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the place may be exempt from the permit requirements of the Heritage Act. A person proposing to undertake minor works may submit a proposal to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely affect the heritage values of the site, the applicant may be exempted from the requirement to obtain a heritage permit. If an applicant is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that the permits co-ordinator be contacted.

Construction dates	1872,
Architect/Designer	Crouch & Wilson,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Other Names	CHINESE PARISH OFFICE OF THE UNITING CHURCH, FORMER CHINESE MISSION UNITING CHURCH, METHODIST MISSION CHURCH,
Hermes Number	4246
Property Number	

## History

Polychromatic Brickwork - from Miles Lewis, *Following the Red Brick Road*

The use of mixed colours of brickwork is an English tradition going back to Tudor times, but the contrasts were mild. The tradition was revived in the 1840s by English architects, and locally by Nathaniel Billing in his St Margaret's Church, Eltham, of 1861 (VHR H0459) - "The first thorough going patterned brick church in Australia. using softly contrasting coloured brickwork." (NT B4133)

High Victorian polychromy was very different in character and sprang from Northern Italy. It can be seen that Joseph Reed was extremely clever to go to the fashionable source- Northern Italy- and to come out of it with a distinctive style of his own, the Lombardic which equally relied upon fashionable polychromy.

Reed and Barnes's Canally, East Melbourne of 1864 was one of the first homes in the colony to be built of red and white pressed bricks. This firm's Independent Church was to follow in 1867, and Rippon Lea in 1868. As well a bungalow in Acland Street, St.Kilda, Rajpootana, built in 1867 in the same contrasting bricks as the Independent Church which seems likely to be another work of Reed & Barnes.

Examples of such work later gave rise to various picturesque styles characterised by the use of red brick, culminating in the Edwardian so-called Queen-Anne and a warehouse version of the Romanesque. What is apparent is that Reedian polychrome was the cradle for a whole family of innovative styles in red brick.

## Plaque Citation

Built in 1872, the church is significant for its links to the early religious and social life of Chinese Christians in Chinatown. It is an early example of brick polychromy in Victoria.

## Extent of Registration

1. All of the building marked B1 on Diagram 2175 held by the Executive Director.
2. All of the land marked L1 on Diagram 2175 held by the Executive Director being all of the land described in Certificate of Title Volume 10492 fFolio 354.

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*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/>*