
Military Mental Block



B7042 Military Mental Block

Location

Waioira Road,, MACLEOD VIC 3085 - Property No B7042

Municipality

DAREBIN CITY

Level of significance

State

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H1091

Heritage Listing

National Trust

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - September 27, 2005

The Military Mental Block, built in early 1919, designed by the Public Works Department is of historic significance at the State level, and is of architectural interest.

Historically, it is significant as the first building in Victoria purpose built for the care of returned servicemen suffering from mental injuries sustained during a war. It was built in recognition of the widespread and severe war neuroses in soldiers with battlefield experience from the First World War, many of whom would be left permanently insane. It was the location for pioneering treatment of such injuries, and was involved in the care of psychological war casualties along with the nearby Bundoora Repatriation hospital for the next 40 years. It is also a significant element of Mont Park, Victoria's early 20th century asylum established in 1910 as a park

and farm asylum estate, and surviving as a rare model of mental health treatment from 1910-1940. Mont Park also became Victoria's largest military hospital in 1918-1920, accommodating over 1000 soldiers in the new 'Chronic' Block alone.

It is also significant for its association with notable early psychiatrists, Dr W E Jones and Dr John Springthorpe, who held that compassion and psychotherapy could alleviate 'shell-shock' (now known as post traumatic stress disorder), a view which failed to be recognised until after the Vietnam War.

Architecturally, the Mont Park building is designed in an interesting Federation style which combines the formal arrangement and imposing entrance of an institution, with generally domestic detailing. It retains reasonable integrity despite modest additions to the rear 1-storey wards and a modern building partly attached to the facade of the 2-storey Administration section.

At the rear, the heavy steel 'hair-pin' fence and brick latrine is the only surviving example of the early airing court enclosures of Mont Park's asylum blocks. The prison-like airing court of this unique World War 1 era refuge painfully recalls cultural attitudes towards the insane in the early 20th century.

Classified: 06/03/2000

See also B6647, B6660, B6789, B2418, B6794, B6937, B6938, B6939, B6024

Hermes Number 64426

Property Number

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.

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