
Former Wantirna Drive-In



B7122 Wantirna Drive In.jpg



B7122 Diner 1999



B7122 Diner 1968



B7122 Ticket Box 1968



B7122 First Screen 1968

Location

Cnr Boronia Road & Mountain Highway,, WANTIRNA VIC 3152 - Property No B7122

Municipality

KNOX CITY

Level of significance

Local

Heritage Listing

National Trust

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - January 7, 2008

What is significant? The Wantirna Drive-in was built by cinema chain Hoyts in 1968 as part of the second phase of drive-in construction in the 1960s. The first had been characterized by lightweight cheap structures, and catering quickly to this novel form of entertainment in the late 1950s. Despite television they remained popular,

and in the 1960s Hoyts determined to provide a higher level of design and comfort for patrons, employing Sydney-based architect Peter Muller, who designed a number of cinemas and drive-ins for them (and most notably the Hoyts cinema centre and offices in Bourke street in 1969). The screen was particularly large. The diner is a distinctive low square brown brick structure with a low-pitched pyramidal roof with a taller central stepped section that unusually incorporated the projection room on top, and a playground to the rear. The ticket box is also brown brick, with an expressed timber structure. A second screen and projection box were added in 1983, but in the face of dwindling audiences it was closed in 1984.

In the 1970s the Trash & Treasure company rented this site and others for Sunday markets, and they purchased this site in 1983, and have been running successful markets ever since. In the late 1990s, the site was however compulsorily acquired by the State Government for a new hospital, who allowed the market to keep trading, but the hospital plans appear to have been abandoned.

How is it significant? The Wantirna Drive-In, with buildings designed by noted Sydney architect Peter Muller for Hoyts, is significant at the Local level for historical, social and architectural reasons.

Why is it significant? The Wantirna Drive-in is historically and socially significant as a relatively intact drive-in site in Victoria out of the 60 that once existed. It is amongst the last remnants of a once extremely popular cultural phenomenon, one that appears to have had a real impact only in the US, Canada and Australia. Inspired by American cultural trends, drive-ins, like motels, were a new type of private or domestic space, a mobile extension of the family living room, and characterized a trend in personal behaviour to be less formal and inhibited in public spaces. They grew out of the extraordinary popularity and increasing affordability of cars, and provided a novel and easy form of entertainment. They catered to a wide range of audiences, allowing a whole family with young children the convenience of staying in their car, for teenagers to socialize apart from their parents, and especially for young adults who were attracted to particular film genres and the intimate private space provided by the car. Unlike those still operating (Dromana, Coburg and Dandenong) Wantirna has architectural significance for the original buildings which survive remarkably intact, namely the snack bar/projection room and the ticket booth. They are notable architectural designs, a rarity for Drive-Ins, which usually consisted of little more than a simple light-weight flat-roofed diner/projection room, a similarly designed ticket box, and a screen. They were designed by the company's favoured architect, noted Sydney-based Peter Muller. His work was strongly influenced by the organic architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, combined with oriental sensibilities. These influences are exhibited at Wantirna particularly in the snack bar/projection room, with its ground hugging brown brick walls, topped by a striking temple-like roof form. Wantirna is also unique for its amphitheatre setting on high hill.

Classified: 03/12/2007

Other Names Trash & Treasure,

Hermes Number 65988

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.

For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>