
Former Methodist Babies' Home

Location

12 Copelen Street,, SOUTH YARRA VIC 3141 - Property No B6477

Municipality

STONNINGTON CITY

Level of significance

Demolished/Removed

Heritage Listing

National Trust

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - May 17, 2004

Erected in 1928-29, the former Methodist Babies Home is of historical significance at the State level for its association with Frederick Oswald Barnett (1883-1972), an indefatigable lobbyist for social reform in Victoria. The establishment of the Home, an important element of Barnett's campaign, demonstrated his skill as a publicist and organiser, and his influence as a humanitarian and idealist. Barnett enlisted the support of the Young Men's Section of the Laymen's Missionary Movement who were instrumental in bringing the scheme to fruition. The strong sense of social obligation and Christian charity that characterised its work reflected Methodist concerns for the welfare of "destitute" children.

The former Methodist Babies Home is of further historical significance as the physical expression of predominantly middle class concerns for the physical and moral health of children reared in "slum" environments. The Home is also associated with an important period in the development of child welfare legislation following the Adoption of Children Act (1928), which provided for the legal adoption of children in Victoria. The Babies Home finally represents the emergence of a professional middle class whose strictures, based on scientific investigation and practical reform, greatly influenced the direction of public policy in the inter-war period. The design and scale of the Nurses' Home, and its proximity to the main ward, reflects the importance of science in the field of child care and mothercraft nursing.

The former Methodist Babies Home is of considerable significance as the earliest purpose built babies home in Victoria. The structure reflects contemporary notions of hospital design, demonstrated by the use of Vita Glass, the provision of screened verandahs, and the inclusion of isolation and formula preparation areas.

The two storey former ward building is of architectural significance as a representative example of the Colonial Georgian revival mode with its symmetrical form and semi-circular portico. The Nurses' Home (1928-29), with its projecting gabled portico, is of a similar architectural style, and combines with the main ward building to form a complementary visual entity. The architectural style is significant for its domestic rather than institutional form, which enabled the buildings to sit comfortably in a suburban setting. The interiors are essentially intact, providing an opportunity to read the functions and process for which the Home was constructed.

Classified: "State" 20/10/1993
Demolished: 1997

Hermes Number 66518

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/>