

Statement of Significance: War Service Homes Commission Precinct

Heritage Place: War Service Homes Commission Precinct	PS ref no: HO323
	
623 Melbourne Road	619 Hudsons Road

What is significant?

The single storey houses at 605–609 + 613–631 Melbourne Road (odds only), 153–155 and 154–160 Hudsons Road, and 25–33 and 28–36 Reed Street, developed on land acquired by the War Service Homes Commission to develop low-cost housing, are significant to the City of Hobsons Bay.

The precinct forms part of a large parcel acquired in 1920 by the War Service Homes Commission and subdivided to create 250 residential lots for low cost housing. Initially construction was concentrated at the east of the precinct including in Birmingham Street, Reed Street, Hudson Road, Mary Street and Melbourne Road whereby in 1925 some 50 homes had been constructed.

After this initial burst of construction, houses were built on most of the hitherto vacant lots along Melbourne Road such that the east part of the subdivision was nearly fully developed by 1930. Construction continued across the broader subdivision, generally in a westwards direction, during the late Interwar period and into the Post-WWII period. Later in the 20th century and more recently, many of the original Interwar and Post-WWII period places have been replaced leaving only a largely intact area to the east end of the original subdivision.

Contributory elements:

Contributory places include:

- 153, 154, 155, 156, 160 Hudsons Road,
- 605, 607, 609, 613, 615, 617, 619, 621, 623, 627, 629, 631 Melbourne Road,
- 27, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 36 Reed Street.

The following original elements also contribute to the significance of the place:

- Hipped or gabled roof forms, clad in terracotta tiles, with timber lined soffits and some with exposed rafter ends.
- Red brick chimneys, some capped with a clinker brick soldier course. Chimneys are squat to gabled roof places and tall to hipped roof places.
- Gabled ends with timber shingled skirts or timber battens and sheeting.

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- Verandahs and porches created by an extension of the main roof form or a separate gable end, either timber-framed or supported by timber posts (some paired) on brick piers (with only a few with balustrade walls).
- Walls clad in weatherboards.
- Timber-framed windows, mostly box framed with either double hung sashes (often with a multi-paned upper sash, some with lead light and decorative glass) or casements.
- Single width vehicle crossovers.
- Intact subdivision pattern.
- Consistent setbacks.
- Concrete kerb and channelling.

The following places and elements do not contribute to the significance of the place:

- Non-original front and rear alterations and additions.
- Carports to the front setback.

How is it significant?

The War Service Homes Commission Precinct is of historical and representative significance to the City of Hobsons Bay.

Why is it significant?

The War Service Homes Commission Precinct is of historical significance as it demonstrates the efforts of the War Service Homes Commission to facilitate low-cost residential development for those of limited means under the provisions of the Housing and Reclamation Act (1920). The Act provided the War Service Homes Commission with the power to acquire land and develop housing to be sold at low cost to families of 'small means'. Housing was to be constructed to designs developed by the State Savings Bank under the supervision of Chief Architectural G Burridge Leith. The precinct consists of the intact remnants of a proposed 250 home estate planned by the War Service Homes Commission acquired in 1920 shortly after the passing of the Act.

Later, the State Savings Bank itself took over operation of the programme which developed in scope throughout the Interwar period. Thousands of homes were constructed across Melbourne including an entire suburb in Port Melbourne in the late 1920s/early 1930s. It laid the ground for the establishment in 1938 of the Housing Commission of Victoria, which assumed responsibility for the provision of public housing in the State. The programme positioned the State as a major provider of residential home construction in the Interwar period, a phase of State intervention in the housing market that is not widely protected under the heritage overlay in the City of Hobsons Bay. (Criterion A)

The War Service Homes Commission Precinct is of representative significance as an intact group of economical, timber-framed versions of the popular bungalow idiom designed under the supervision of chief bank architect G B Leith for the State Savings Bank after WWI. Whilst unpretentious, they are differentiated with a range of detailing generally indicative of the Californian bungalow type and reflecting the underlying influence of an Arts and Crafts aesthetic on that style in their uses of 'natural' materials and vernacular detailing including the predominant use of weatherboards, shingling to the gable ends, terracotta tile clad roofs, with limited superfluous detailing, except to the windows.

Later, State Savings Bank designs would incorporate emerging trends or popular architectural styles in home design, a few of which are also represented in the precinct. (Criterion D)

Primary source

Spotswood Activity Centre Structure Plan Heritage Study 2022

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HOBSONS BAY PLANNING SCHEME

Number	Address	Grade
153	Hudsons Road	Contributory
154	Hudsons Road	Contributory
155	Hudsons Road	Contributory
156	Hudsons Road	Contributory
160	Hudsons Road	Contributory
605	Melbourne Road	Contributory
607	Melbourne Road	Contributory
609	Melbourne Road	Contributory
613	Melbourne Road	Contributory
615	Melbourne Road	Contributory
617	Melbourne Road	Contributory
619	Melbourne Road	Contributory
621	Melbourne Road	Contributory
623	Melbourne Road	Contributory
627	Melbourne Road	Contributory
629	Melbourne Road	Contributory
631	Melbourne Road	Contributory
27	Reed Street	Contributory
29	Reed Street	Contributory
30	Reed Street	Contributory
32	Reed Street	Contributory
33	Reed Street	Contributory
34	Reed Street	Contributory
36	Reed Street	Contributory

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