

# Place record(s)

Maribyrnong Heritage Review

## Identification and location

Name of place

Yarraville Baby Welfare Centre

Place Identifier

2999

Other Names

Infant Welfare Centre

Address 095

Hamilton Street

Footscray

Potential Significance: City

Creation date(s): 1928-

Map (Melway) 42 A7

Boundary description

The whole of the site and fabric with emphasis on the interwar period.

Local Government Area: City of Maribyrnong

Ownership Type: Private

## Description

### Physical Description

This is a custom (probably architect) designed brick and stucco Arts & Crafts Bungalow with unglazed terra-cotta roof tiles. The exterior of the building is well preserved to the extent of the stucco being still unpainted which is rare in buildings of this age in the region and rare among buildings of any age in the City.

The design is distinguished by the trapezoidal shaped verandah piers and chimney while the clinker brick soldier coursing and lozenge patterns relate well to the unpainted stucco as a strong expression of the Arts & Crafts philosophy, honest expression of materials. Other elements such as the screen door are rare items in their own right as well as evoking its previous public health use. The diamond pane upper window sashes add valuable detail to the overall design.

Site Type Infant welfare centre

### Context

The house is located in a largely Edwardian-era residential precinct, with a dominance of timber construction. Its larger block size and masonry construction gives the building the

## History

### History Context

The first infant welfare centres in Victoria were opened in 1917 in Free Kindergartens in Richmond and Carlton. The following year the Victorian Baby Health Centres association was formed and they worked with municipal councils to provide baby health centres. An alternative to the Baby Health Centres association was the New Zealand-based Society for Health of Women and Children, which worked with a much smaller number of Victorian councils to provide infant welfare centres from 1920.' { Barnard, 1999}

Local government infant welfare was subsidised by the Victorian government. The Victorian Baby Health Centres Association promoted construction of this type of centre and by 1934, 145 centres had been built in the State. Similar centres such as the one built later in Bendigo (demolished) commenced when the local branch of the Women's National League were inspired by the success of baby week in Melbourne to provide funds for baby welfare.

Footscray was one of the first municipalities to open a baby health centre under the Society for Health of Women and Children, or Plunkett system. The first infant welfare centre in Footscray opened above a shop in Nicholson Street. By 1923 the Council had opened another Plunkett Infant Welfare Centre in Yarraville because of the great demand on the Footscray centre. With a donation from Mr Tweddle, a businessman and philanthropist, the Society for Health of Women and Babies also established the Tweddle Hospital for Babies in Footscray in 1924. Footscray Council donated the land for the centre in Gordon Street. The hospital served as a training school for nurses in the Plunkett system of infant welfare, but was also the first hospital in Australia that took in mothers as well as babies to assist with feeding problems, etc. It was rebuilt in the 1950s and has now been moved from its original site.

Maribyrnong had an infant welfare centre, operating out of the Methodist Church in Raleigh Road by 1928. When the Maribyrnong Public Hall was built the infant welfare centre moved to that site, but later to a purpose-built site in Rosamund Road. Another Maternal and Child Health Centre operated in connection with the Maribyrnong Pre-School centre, which opened in Warrs Road in the 1950s.

During World War Two the Footscray Mechanics 'Progressive Women's Committee urged the Council to establish a crèche and kindergarten for the children of munitions workers. It was established in Albert Street, next to the infant welfare centre. (Both buildings have since been demolished.) More infant welfare centres, often combined with pre-school centres, were added as the population expanded in new areas such as Kingsville, West Footscray, Braybrook and Maidstone in the post World War Two era. It was also in the post World War Two era that kindergartens, sometimes provided by Council and sometimes by churches, began to spread through the study area.' { Barnard, 1999}

This Baby Welfare Centre was erected for the City of Footscray to serve the Yarraville, Seddon, Kingsville and Queensville areas. It appears to be a custom design, probably from the Public Works Department of Victoria although other examples such as in Bendigo were the result of open architectural competition. An application to connect the building to the sewer was made in 1928. It has been used for this purpose until relatively recently. Its creation parallels with the rapid growth of new houses built in the Seddon area during the Edwardian-era as a result of the upgrade of the Seddon Railway Station. More houses followed in the nearby Kingsville and Queensville estates. These new homes had generated families after World War One and the need for community services. The centre was the second, after the Albert St example, erected by the city. The Albert St complex (demolished) was thought to be the first of its kind in the State, being a combined Infant Welfare, Crèche and Kindergarten.

The Albert St Footscray crèche and baby health centre was built around the Second War but was demolished 1987: this was the only other example from pre 1950 identified in the City.

### Thematic context

**Australian Principal Theme:** Developing local, regional and national economies

**PAHT Subtheme:** Treating what ails Australians

**Local Theme(s):** 14.2 Infant health and kindergartens

### Condition

Good (partially disturbed, well preserved). The fence has been replaced with one related to what was probably originally a wire fabric fence but could have been a capped picket fence.

### Integrity

Intact/minimal intrusions

### Threats:

Currently (Feb 2000) being considered for unit development.

### Statement of Significance

This Baby Welfare Centre is significant socially, historically and architecturally within the Western Region because:

- it has served as a community building over a long period within the City and thus has accrued a high social and historical significance, particularly in regard to infant health and local community life (criterion A4), (criterion G1);
- its construction represents the next phase of community development after the rapid rise in new house numbers at Seddon in the Edwardian-era (criterion A4);
- it is the only surviving pre WW2 baby health centres known in the City (criterion B2);
- it has a high external integrity to its construction date, thus enhancing the expression of the social and historical significance (criterion C2);
- the unpainted stucco is rare in the City and the Region (criterion B2);

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it is a good and well preserved example of the Arts & Crafts Bungalow style and is among the best examples of the Bungalow era in the City (criterion F1) .

**Comparative Examples:**

There is no other pre WW2 baby health centre known to survive in the City. This example h

**Recommendations**

Heritage Victoria Register: No

Register of the National Estate: Recommended

National Trust Register: recommended

Other Heritage Listings: Recommended heritage overlay

Planning Scheme Protection: Recommended HA10.

External Paint Controls Apply?: Yes

Internal Alteration Controls Apply?: No

Tree Controls Apply?: No

Included on the Victorian Heritage Register under the Act: No

Are there Outbuildings or Fences not Exempt?: No

Prohibited Uses may be Permitted?: ?

**Australian Heritage Commission Criteria**

*A4 Importance for their association with events, developments or cultural phases which have had a significant role in the human occupation and evolution of the nation, state, region or community.*

It has served as a community building over a long period within the City and thus has accrued a high social and historical significance, particularly in regard to infant health and local community life; its construction represents the next phase of community development after the rapid rise in new house numbers at Seddon in the Edwardian-era

*B2 Importance in demonstrating a distinctive way of life, custom, process, land-use, function or design no longer practiced, in danger of being lost, or of exceptional interest.*

the unpainted stucco is rare in the City and the Region  
it is the only surviving pre WW2 baby health centres known in the City

*C2 Importance for information contributing to a wider understanding of the history of human occupation of Australia.*

It has a high external integrity to its construction date, thus enhancing the expression of the social and historical significance

*F1 Importance for their technical, creative, design or artistic excellence, innovation or achievement.*

it is a good and well preserved example of the Arts & Crafts Bungalow style and is among the best examples of the Bungalow era in the City

*G1 Importance as places highly valued by a community for reasons of religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations.*

It has accrued a high social and historical significance, particularly in regard to infant health and local community life

## Documentation

### References

B DeCorte 23/11/99 re planning application for units- need to upgrade;  
MMBW PS file 171755 litho 221: 1928- Footscray City Council;  
D1962, D1952: BWC  
VYB 1973;  
Butler. 'Eaglehawk & Bendigo Heritage Study'  
Barnard, 1999. Draft Environmental History Maribyrnong heritage review;  
Lack: 261  
City of Footscray, 1945. 'Facts about Footscray City': 19  
Further work:  
A search of the former FCC engineering drawings should be made for this building.

### Data recording

Assessed By: Graeme Butler  
Assessed Date: 16/2/00