

| | | | |
|-----------------------|--|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Building: | Former Fairfield Hospital | Significance: | A |
| Address: | Yarra Bend Road, Fairfield | Melway Map Ref: | 2D F1 |
| Building Type: | Hospital | Construction Date: | 1901-04; 1916-17; 1932; 1949 |
| Architect: | Wharton Down & Gibbins?; A & K Henderson; Percy Everett | Builder: | Unknown |



| | | | |
|------------------------------------|-----|---------------------------------------|-----|
| Intactness: | | Condition: | |
| G[] F[x] P[] | | G[x] F[] P[] | |
| Existing Heritage Listings: | | Recommended Heritage Listings: | |
| Victorian Heritage Register | [] | Victorian Heritage Register | [x] |
| Register of the National Estate | [] | Register of the National Estate | [x] |
| National Trust | [x] | Heritage Overlay Controls | [x] |

History

Sites near the Yarra had long been favoured for institutions such as the Inebriate Retreat (1873) on the Merri Creek and the Yarra Bend Lunatic Asylum (1948), and in the 1870s, there was an investigation into possible sites for an infectious Diseases Hospital at Yarra Bend.¹ In 1890, Dr Dan Astley Gresswell came to the Board of Public Health and submitted a report on 'Sanitary Conditions and Sanitary Administration of Melbourne', which stressed again the need for an infection diseases hospital, separate from the existing Melbourne and Alfred Hospitals.² A perspective drawing was prepared by architects Wharton Down & Gibbins in 1893, showing a proposed Infectious Diseases Hospital near Melbourne.³

In 1897, the year of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, the Mayor of Melbourne, Cr Strong, convened a meeting at the request of Lord Brassey, the Governor of Victoria, on the subject of a Fever Hospital and the raising of funds to construct it. The proposed name for the hospital was the Queen's Memorial Infectious Diseases Hospital.

The municipalities of Prahran, South Melbourne, Hawthorn, Footscray, St Kilda, Brighton, Williamstown, Essendon, Flemington and Kensington, Northcote, Kew, North Melbourne, Brunswick, Heidelberg, Boroondara and Malvern were all represented on a fund raising committee. By 1897, £16,000 had been received and 15 acres of land granted by the government. Tenders were called in 1900 for the hospital's first buildings and these were completed in 1901.⁴

When the hospital opened in October 1904, all but seven municipalities had withdrawn from the hospital management committee, leaving Melbourne, Fitzroy, Richmond, St Kilda, North Melbourne, Brunswick and Coburg.⁵ Dr Sydney Allen was the first Medical Superintendent, and Miss Evelyn Conyers the Matron. By this time, the reserve had grown to 22 acres and contained a receiving house, with separate wards for scarlet fever and diphtheria. Each ward had 25 beds, was well ventilated and had bitumen floors which could be washed down as required. The circulation between the buildings was by asphalt paths under verandahs. The complex had two separate vehicle entrances, for infectious and non-infectious traffic. It was a 'locked' hospital, and access was supervised by resident lodge keepers. However, by 1952, the hospital was reputedly the first 'fever hospital' in the world to allow visitors to patients.

The kitchen block, now demolished, was at the centre of the complex. The nurses' home was on the eastern part of the complex; this was been since enlarged by architects, A & K Henderson in 1916 and 1932.⁶ The new administration buildings and two ward pavilions, designed by A & K Henderson were opened in June 1917 to cater for a new disease, cerebro-spinal meningitis. A & K Henderson became involved with the hospital in 1914 and planned and executed an extensive building programme, which was approved during 1916. This included the large extension to the original (1901-04) Nurses' Home on its eastern side, making it a three level building with verandahs overlooking the Yarra River. This was extended again to the south in 1924.

The complex is the ambulance garage, workshops and men's quarters, designed under Public Works Department Chief Architect Percy Everett in 1940.⁷ One of the later additions was the Modernist F V G Scholes block (1949), also designed by Percy Everett.⁸

At its peak in the 1930s, Fairfield Hospital had over 700 beds; by the early 1990s, this number had dropped to approximately 100.

Description

Externally the first buildings were of cavity face brickwork with stucco dressings and Marseilles pattern terracotta tiles; they generally followed the Queen Anne or Federation style of architecture.⁹

The two original ward blocks (1901-04; Building Nos. 4 and 5; later the Pathology Building and the Pay Office and Fitters and Turner's Building) are single-storey red brick Edwardian buildings characterised by two conically roofed octagonal tower rooms on the north end. The buildings are long and pavilion-like, with terracotta tiled roofs and timber-framed windows.

The new administration building and wards of 1916-17 is a symmetrical double-storey austere brick building, late Edwardian in style. The walls are of red brick with rendered string courses, lintels and chimney caps. The entrance is marked by a decorative gable-end bearing the words the QUEEN'S MEMORIAL INFECTIOUS DISEASES HOSPITAL. The building has a relatively complex hipped and gabled roof clad in terracotta tiles. The entrance porch is a later addition.

The Nurses' Home (1901-04, extended 1916 on its east side) is a three-storey brick building with an unusual three-storey timber-framed verandah. The roof is penetrated by tall gabled bays.

The ambulance garage, workshops and men's quarters (1940) is an austere single- and double-storey brick building with Moderne characteristics. The double-storey section is parapeted and has a relatively narrow horizontal band of windows. The ambulance garage is behind a dominant curved brick wall which forms part of the perimeter fence of the complex. The F V G Scholes block (1949) is an unusual modern building with a glazed facade, much of it zig-zag in plan.

Other structures on the site include the tall, tapered brick incinerator chimney.

Many of the buildings have been altered, particularly in the post-War period. Some entrances have been changed, and covered walkways connecting buildings erected.

Significance

The former Fairfield Hospital is of state historical, social and local architectural significance. Historically, the complex was instrumental in the treatment of infectious diseases in Victoria for most of the 20th century, and derives social significance from the large numbers of Victorians who were treated there, particularly during epidemics of diseases such as scarlet fever and poliomyelitis. Architecturally, the complex includes a number of individually significant buildings representative of a number of architectural styles from Edwardian to early Modernist.

Original Sources

Database of the Register of the National Estate No. 100230.

Graeme Butler. *Northcote Urban Conservation Study*. 1982.

-
- 1 A S Kenyon, *The City of Streams*, Heidelberg, 1934, pp. 10f.
 - 2 *Fairfield Hospital Victoria, 1904-1954* (Golden Jubilee Program), Melbourne, 1954.
 - 3 *Weekly Times*, 21/10/1905, pps. 10,13.
 - 4 MUA cites Building Engineering and Mining Journal, 22/4/1893, p.150.
 - 5 *Fairfield Hospital Victoria, 1904-1954* (Golden Jubilee Program), Melbourne, 1954.
 - 6 *ibid.*
 - 7 *ibid.*
 - 8 *Argus*, 27/10/1932, p.5, £25,000 spent, includes extension to Nurses' Home to provide 56 more nurses places; builder, J Whitelaw, additions in matching style.
 - 9 Contract Drawings, 4/4/1940 (Fairfield Hospital).
 - 8 *Fairfield Hospital Victoria, 1904-1954* (Golden Jubilee Program), Melbourne, 1954.
 - 9 *Fairfield Hospital Victoria, 1904-1954* (Golden Jubilee Program), Melbourne, 1954.